

Mackie, Alison Child Minding

Alness

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 July 2025

Service provided by:
Alison Mackie

Service provider number:
SP2003907930

Service no:
CS2003008306

About the service

Alison Mackie provides a childminding service from their home in a quiet, residential area in the town of Alness. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of five children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom a maximum of five will be under 12, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. There were three children present during this inspection.

The service is close to the local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. The children use the kitchen, living room area and bathroom. Children also have access to a garden to the rear of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17 July 2025, between 9.30am and 11.00am. 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:

- spoke with three children using the service;
- reviewed feedback received from two families;
- spoke with the childminder;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- 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; and
- 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 experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from the childminder, who supported their care needs.
- The childminder used her knowledge and experience to support children to develop lifelong skills at a pace that was right for them.
- The childminder's home provided a warm and welcoming environment for the children who attended.
- Children were involved in shaping their daily experiences in a meaningful way and their views were listened to, valued and respected.
- Children were cared for by an experienced childminder who fostered positive relationships with them and their families.

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?	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?

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

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from the childminder, who supported their care needs. The childminder was responsive to their emotional wellbeing. Comfort and cuddles were offered when needed, which gave children reassurance. This supported children to feel safe and secure during their time at the service.

The childminder had formed trusting relationships with parents, which contributed to children feeling loved and valued. Parents commented:

"It's the only place I can drop my child off without any tears when I leave. She creates a home environment where my child feels safe and happy."

"I have had Alison being our childminder since my first born was 10 months old. I wouldn't go to anyone else to have my children."

Personal planning information was in place for all children and contained important information that supported meeting children's needs. For example, details about their health and care routines. The childminder knew children well which supported them to meet children's care needs. They spoke with parents regularly about the individual needs of children. This approach supported effective communication and consistency of care. Older children were able to share their own likes and dislikes and were completing their own record of this with the childminder. Some information in children's personal plans was not up to date. We discussed ensuring personal planning information was reviewed with families every six months or as required, recording any changes.

Processes and procedures were in place to ensure the safe management and administration of medication. Although there was no long-term medication in place, the childminder kept clear records of when medication had been administered, with parental consent. This contributed to keeping children safe and healthy.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had opportunities to lead their play and have fun in the childminder's home. The three minded children in the service were happy and engaged. The childminder skilfully supported their play with sensitive interactions which extended their thinking.

Planning was informal and responsive to the changing interests and needs of the children attending. The childminder provided experiences that were suitable for each child's stage of development, for example construction and crafts. One child told us "I enjoy being outside the most, and drawing." The childminder used her knowledge and experience to support children to develop lifelong skills at a pace that was right for them.

The childminder had a good understanding of child development, using her knowledge to support children's overall wellbeing. They had undertaken recent training on child development in a specific age range, reflecting on how that was helping them to support the children attending her service. This contributed to children's developing resilience, as they were supported to manage their emotions and develop friendships.

Children's play and learning opportunities were enhanced through strong connections within their community, such as going to local parks and going on outings. Children benefited from regular trips to a woodland area close to the childminder's home, accessed from the garden area. Older children were included in trips when they attended after school and during the holidays.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

The childminder's home provided a warm and welcoming environment for the children who attended. It was furnished to a good standard, with ample space for the children's needs. There was plenty of light and ventilation, with spaces for children to rest and relax in. This gave children the message that they mattered.

Resources were placed where children could reach them, supporting them to direct their own play. The childminder had provided resources that engaged children in line with their interests. One child was engaged in small world play with a farm, happily exploring other resources alongside this. Resources provided children with a range of stimulating play experiences which supported their learning.

Children enjoyed playing in the secure, enclosed garden. This area offered a variety of surfaces to play on. Children were developing their gross motor skills, climbing, and sliding. The childminder supported children to safely negotiate steps, and to access different areas within the garden. This meant that children were developing their confidence, and that their overall wellbeing was enhanced by regular access to fresh air.

Children and families' personal information was stored in line with best practice, ensuring confidentiality. The childminder had a professional attitude to all record keeping for her service, which supported her to share relevant information with families about their children's care and support.

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.

The childminder was a skilled practitioner who formally reflected on their practice, using best practice guidance to evaluate their service. We discussed reviewing the new Quality Improvement Framework as part of their self-evaluation. The childminder had been exploring the potential to further develop their service by offering funded childcare spaces, in partnership with the local authority. They recognised that this could enable them to support more families and develop some aspects of their service through the professional support that would be available.

Families had strong communication with the childminder through a range of methods to suit their needs, which supported them to be involved in their child's care. They had the opportunity to share their views about the service, and we saw that the feedback was positive. All parents who gave feedback, as part of this inspection, strongly agreed that they and their child were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service.

Children were at the centre of the childminder's practice and each child was valued as an individual. Children were involved in shaping their daily experiences in a meaningful way and their views were listened to, valued and respected.

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.

Children were cared for by an experienced childminder who fostered positive relationships with them and their families. Parents told us "Alison is just like family to them. They love her so much she is so patient, kind and caring, she is amazing at her job. A complete asset to us." and "The welcome in the mornings makes an easy drop off." They spoke to children kindly and with respect, appreciating their individual needs and personalities. The childminder was consistently at children's level when interacting with them, taking time to explain to each child what they were doing. They were able to anticipate children's moods and needs as they had developed very close relationships with them. As a result, children received the care they needed at a time that was right for them.

The children present on the day of the inspection were happy, settled and relaxed in the care of the childminder. We saw lots of warm and nurturing interactions, chatting, smiles, praise, and encouragement. Children were encouraged to be independent and supported where needed.

The childminder had undertaken core training such as child protection and first aid, as well as additional training that was relevant to the children attending their service. They had reflected on this training and were putting learning into practice to support children. The childminder took a professional approach to ensuring that their skills, knowledge, and experience were based on best, and current, practice. They were a member of the Scottish Childminding Association and engaged with training opportunities provided by them regularly. This meant that children and families could be confident that the childminder was trained, competent and skilled.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - 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?	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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