

Ashley Walker Childcare Child Minding

Inverurie

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 August 2025

Service provided by:
Ashley Walker

Service provider number:
SP2017989311

Service no:
CS2017359539

About the service

Ashley Walker Childcare provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area of Kintore, Aberdeenshire. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than three are not yet of an age to attend primary school, and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminders family.

The service is close to a local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in a playroom/sun lounge, dining kitchen and downstairs toilet. Children also have direct access to a large enclosed rear garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 August 2025 between 08:00 and 12:15. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- made contact with two parents of children who attended the service
- spoke with the childminder and children
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were at the heart of the service and were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families well.
- Children experienced very warm and caring interactions from the childminder.
- The setting made very good use of the outdoors, at their home and in the wider community.
- Risk assessments could be updated to reflect benefits and support risky play in line with the experiences offered to children.
- The childminder should now take time to evaluate improvements, documenting the impact of these on outcomes for children.

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

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|--|---------------|
| 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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were very well nurtured and supported with the childminder showing a genuine interest in their overall wellbeing and joining in their play. They were very respectful, giving children choice which allowed them to lead their own play. The childminder was caring in their interactions with the children, spent time down at their level, offering lots of closeness and hugs. There was an ethos within the setting of recognising and talking about feelings and emotions, with the childminder asking how children were feeling and offering cuddles. Families told us they had a good relationship with the childminder. When asked about positive aspects of the service, one parent said, "Their relationship, [The childminder's] passion to ensure my child develops, has fun and is safe." Another parent said, "We couldn't be happier with [the childminder]. [Their] flexibility is extremely helpful and knowing [my child] enjoys going there is wonderful." This supported the children to feel nurtured, safe and secure.

Personal plans were in place for all the children. Their wellbeing and progress was being well supported through effective personal planning. These were completed with parents, which supported effective information sharing and promoted a continuity of care for children. Personal planning documents were individualised for each child and highlighted their development with next steps. Chronologies captured significant events in children's lives. These highlighted that the childminder was aware of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues arising in children's lives and that appropriate action had been carried out. Parents told us that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan.

Snack time was a very positive experience for the children. This was unhurried and relaxed which allowed children to eat at a pace which suited them. The childminder provided nutritious foods for the children and were also given a choice of fruits. The childminder sat and ate with the children, encouraging and supporting them to eat independently. We saw independence being developed through children spreading butter on their toast. Opportunities such as these, promoted important life skills. Parents told us that their children could always choose from a healthy range of snacks.

The childminder took a respectful approach to nappy changing, taking into account children's privacy and dignity. This was observed to be a relaxed, nurturing experience with the childminder chatting to the child. Appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) was used and good hand washing practices were in place. This helped minimise the risk of infection and keep children safe.

There were no children within the service requiring medication at the time of our inspection. We noted that the childminder had produced a clear medication policy which highlighted how they would effectively manage the administration of medication to ensure children's health and wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were fully engaged in their play and learning. We saw that the play was child led and children were able to choose from a wide range of quality resources and activities. Children experienced high quality play and learning opportunities, with the childminder supporting this well. This contributed to the children being happy and settled, enjoying play and learning tailored to their individual needs.

The childminder was very responsive to children's current interests and provided resources to engage children in meaningful play experiences. We saw children play with loose parts enjoying filling containers with a variety of these. A child went on to use a dog jigsaw piece and was pretending the dog was eating the log slices saying 'mmmmm'. We saw the childminder took this opportunity to reinforce vocabulary and extend the children's thinking through the use of questions.

Children's numeracy, language and literacy skills were promoted by having access to the very good selection of resources available throughout the setting. These included books, jigsaws and different sorting games. The childminder was animated while reading and related these to their experiences, holding the children's interests. While playing with children, the childminder modelled positive use of vocabulary, and language, including mathematical language. This contributed to the development of the children's literacy and numeracy skills, and the foundations of lifelong learning.

Discussions with the childminder highlighted they had a very good understanding of child development. They used their knowledge to recognise children's achievements and identify where they required support or challenge. The childminder was sharing observations of the children with families. These were linked to the wellbeing indicators, 'Realising the Ambition' and contained next steps. We discussed the importance of ensuring that the children's next steps were followed up and shared with parents. This would ensure continued progress and allow the childminder to provide targeted support for learning and development.

Children had very good opportunities daily to benefit from fresh air, exercise and to explore their local community. The childminder recognised and valued the importance of this and took the children on walks to green spaces, woods, and local play areas and got involved in community initiatives. This supported children to be healthy, included and involved.

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 environment was very well maintained and secure with plenty of natural light. There was a welcoming, homely feel and children were observed to move freely around the space. Children were seen to comfortably move resources around to support their play. It felt like the children had ownership of their space, even though it was the childminder's home.

The layout of the environment was very well thought out. The playroom was inviting with some provocations to play and other resources accessible on shelves. Comfy sofas offered the children a cosy space to rest and relax. Resources were offered in such a manner that supported children to access them independently, enabling them to lead their own play and have choice. A variety of resources such as construction, small world, loose parts, role play, games and books were on offer which supported different play experiences and age ranges.

The children didn't have free flow access to the outdoors during our visit due to the fence enclosing the garden being damaged. Children still had the choice of where to play and spent time outdoors at a local park. We saw children having fun climbing and sliding down the chute and play on wobbly bikes and swings. Children had the opportunity to be out in the fresh air and develop confidence, resilience and gross motor skills as they climbed and navigated various pieces of equipment. Parents told us their children always had the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said, "[My child] is constantly outdoors in [the childminders] garden and at the park." Another parent said, "[The childminder] has a large garden with a range of outdoor toys suitable for my child". This contributed to children being fit and healthy.

The childminder implemented various systems which supported the children to stay safe and well. The home and garden were secure and equipment was well maintained. The childminder had risk assessments in place which had been updated regularly. We discussed updating these further to reflect benefits and support risky play in line with the experiences offered to children. We saw that childminder spoke to children about risks which supported their awareness of managing risk, being responsible and keeping themselves safe.

Effective infection control measures provided a very safe, hygienic environment for children. We observed the childminder and children practice good, effective hand washing routines at appropriate times. Cleaning was carried out effectively and PPE (personal protective equipment) was used during nappy changing. This ensured the risk of infection was minimised.

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 had produced a set of values and aims which were a true reflection of the service they offered. At the next review we discussed the benefit of creating these in consultation with the parents and children, around the experiences they enjoyed and what the service meant to them. This would ensure that parents and children continued to feel valued and included within the service.

The childminder recognised the importance of actively seeking the views of children and families to inform the development of their setting. They used informal approaches such as face-to-face conversations, WhatsApp and more formal approaches such as questionnaires to gain information from families and children using the service. It was noted that the feedback was extremely positive which reassured the childminder that they were providing a quality service for children and families. We noted children's views and ideas had been considered when planning. This ensured that children's contributions were valued and helped shape the service. Parents told us they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the service.

Self evaluation enabled the childminder to deliver very good care and support tailored to individual children and families. They took time to reflect on their service using recognised quality assurance tools such as 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' to identify improvements. We discussed documenting developments within an improvement plan which would highlight positive changes to outcomes for children in the service.

The childminder had a range of policies and procedures in place supporting them to provide a quality service. Some of policies required minimal updates and we directed them to best practice guidance to support with this and ensure they related to current documentation. This ensured children had access to a quality service and experienced care that was right for them.

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

The childminder had the children and families at the heart of the service, demonstrating warmth, kindness and compassion in their interactions with children. This enabled children to feel valued, loved and secure. We found the childminder to be very enthusiastic and motivated and our discussions highlighted that they were extremely passionate about their role.

Parents told us they were always welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their care, play and learning. One parent said, "We always go in and have a chat with [the childminder] whenever we pick [our child] up." Another parent said, "At pick up we discuss what they have done that day, what my child has enjoyed, progressed/struggled with etc." As a result, parents felt welcome, relationships were positive and they felt included.

The childminder was working towards a recognised childcare qualification and had a very good understanding of how children develop and learn. The childminder confidently discussed how they were supporting the children's development to ensure they reached their potential and this was evident in children's personal plans.

The childminder made very good use of professional development opportunities and had undertaken a range of relevant training. For example, courses through the National Deaf Society and the SCMA (Scottish Childminders Association) such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and The Senses. The childminder used a log to effectively document training undertaken and their reflections. We discussed the value of evaluating and reviewing this after three to six months which would highlight what had improved their practice and outcomes for children and families using the service.

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

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| 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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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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