

Safe 'n' Sound Childminding Service Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 August 2025

Service provided by:
Nicola Gibson

Service provider number:
SP2008970320

Service no:
CS2008178822

About the service

Nicola Gibson, trading as Safe 'n' Sound Childminding Service, operates a childminding service from their home in Maddiston, Falkirk. The childminder may provide a care service to a maximum of eight children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom a maximum of six 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. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service offers children access to the living room where they have ample space to play and rest. The kitchen/dining area is used for mealtimes as well as arts and craft activities. The downstairs toilet supports children to be independent. The fully enclosed outdoor space to the rear of the property offers children a secure area to play. The service is close to amenities including parks and local primary schools and nursery.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 20 August 2025 between 12:30 and 14:45. 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 children in the service
- reviewed digital responses from six families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Warm, nurturing care helped children feel safe, secure, and emotionally supported.
- Children benefitted from a comfortable, welcoming and homely environment.
- The childminder's understanding of child development meant that children enjoyed fun activities which were appropriate for their age and stage.
- Reflective practice and feedback supported continuous improvement in the service.
- Skilled, compassionate interactions supported children's development and confidence.

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 found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

Children were cared for with warmth, kindness and a nurturing approach. They experienced care that was well considered to meet their individual needs. The childminder understood the importance of developing positive relationships with families. This ensured clear communication which supported children to feel safe and secure.

All families who responded to our questionnaire "strongly agreed" that they were happy with the care and support their child received in the service. They told us that the childminder was kind, organised and reliable. They also said, "She is a lovely person who takes exceptional care of my child" and "I completely trust her with my child." A child shared their thoughts as they told us about the childminder, "She's really kind and looks after me."

Families provided snacks and packed lunches for children. The childminder had a good understanding of the important benefits of ensuring mealtimes were a relaxed, unhurried and social experience for children. They recognised that mealtime routines were a rich opportunity to promote close attachments as children developed healthy eating habits.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. The childminder used this information, alongside information shared informally by families at drop off and pick up time, to support children's routines. Personal plans were updated regularly with families. As a result, the childminder could respond to changes in children's lives. This further encouraged strong relationships and meant children experienced a consistent and continuous approach to their care.

At the time of inspection no children required medication. We were satisfied that appropriate procedures were in place to safely administer, record and share information with families when it was needed.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

The childminder responded well to children's individual needs and interests when offering play and learning opportunities. Children benefitted from a balanced mix of planned and spontaneous experiences, which supported their development and enjoyment. They were encouraged to take the lead in their play, with the childminder chatting to them in a way that helped to extend their thinking. Planned activities, including seasonal celebrations, introduced children to new ideas and experiences in a fun and meaningful way.

Children's experiences were effectively recorded and shared with families through a range of methods, including digital daily diaries for younger children, and within personal plans. Observations and photographic evidence were used well to document children's learning and progress. This supported the childminder to identify and plan appropriate next steps, ensuring learning opportunities were responsive to children's interests and developmental needs. We discussed ways to record and support children to look back on their experiences and what they had learned. This would further support children to feel proud of their achievements and build their confidence.

The childminder made very good use of both the local area and wider community to broaden children's

experiences. Children enjoyed exploring nature, spending time in parks, and taking part in local groups where they met other children and adults. These opportunities helped children to learn through play, build relationships, and feel connected to the world around them.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a homely environment that was comfortable, welcoming and offered them space to play and relax. The childminder responded thoughtfully to children's needs and provided activities that reflected their interests. We discussed enhancing the environment further with more open-ended and natural materials to encourage creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving skills.

The outdoor area at the rear of the property was fully enclosed, secure and offered children a safe space to play and enjoy fresh air in all weathers. Children also had regular access to fresh air and exercise as they had fun and made use of outdoor spaces in the local community. Outdoor experiences meant children were learning about the benefits of an active lifestyle that promoted their health and wellbeing.

The property was very well maintained indoors and outdoors. Risk assessments ensured that children's safety was promoted as potential risks had been minimised. Infection prevention and control measures were in place. Regular cleaning of toys and resources, alongside effective handwashing at key times, meant we were satisfied that the spread of infection was minimised. As a result, children were cared for in a safe and secure environment where their wellbeing was prioritised.

The childminder understood the importance of keeping children's personal information secure. They sought permission before displaying or sharing photographs of children and followed General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidance to ensure appropriate systems were in place.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The vision, values and aims of the service were clearly reflected in the warm interactions and caring relationships observed during the inspection. The childminder's responsive and nurturing approach helped children feel loved, safe and secure. This created a positive environment where children were confident, relaxed and emotionally supported.

The childminder was committed to delivering high standards for children and their families. They had a very good understanding of the importance of developing strong relationships and effective communication. One parent told us, "We communicate openly about the events of the day and support one another whenever possible."

Feedback from families was gathered regularly through informal chats and questionnaires. Children's views were also considered through daily conversations and careful observations. The childminder considered children's experiences and made meaningful changes to continually improve the care and activities offered.

The positive ethos meant children experienced high quality care with a childminder dedicated to meeting their needs.

The childminder made good use of the Care Inspectorate's document A Quality Framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare. This supported them to reflect on the quality of the service and identify areas where they might make improvements. Their use of the framework showed a commitment to the continual development of their practice.

Strong links had been established with the local authority and the Scottish Childminding Association. The childminder was approved to work in partnership with Falkirk Council to deliver funded childcare for eligible children. These professional relationships further supported the childminder to reflect on their practice and continue improving the quality of their service.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and 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 experienced childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of how children develop and learn. They were mindful of this as they planned activities, ensuring they were age and stage appropriate. The childminder was skilled and made good use of effective questioning and sensitively supported children as they learned to share and take turns. They interacted with children in a kind and thoughtful way, responding to their needs and interests. The childminder also recognised the importance of children having fun in their play to enable learning to be taken forward. This meant children were well supported and encouraged to achieve their potential.

The childminder held a recognised early learning and childcare qualification and was keen to continue with their professional development. Regular training helped keep their knowledge current and supported safe, high-quality care. By taking time to reflect on their practice, they identified useful learning opportunities to build on their skills and improve outcomes for children. This thoughtful approach meant children benefitted from consistent, caring support from someone who was dedicated and enthusiastic about their role.

Interactions with children were compassionate and respectful. The childminder recognised the importance of nurturing and responsive attachments. The rights of the child were promoted and evident in the childminders practice and in the way they communicated with children. As a result, children felt safe, secure and valued.

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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