

Hamilton, Susan Child Minding

Dunfermline

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 September 2025

Service provided by:
Susan Hamilton

Service provider number:
SP2005946010

Service no:
CS2005092226

About the service

Susan Hamilton operates a childminding service from their home in Dunfermline, Fife. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than six are under 12 years, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

The service offers children access to the living room, playroom and hallway where they have ample space to eat, rest and play. The downstairs toilet supports children to be independent. The fully enclosed outdoor space to the rear of the property offers children an interesting and secure area to play and explore. The service is close to amenities including parks and local primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 11 September 2025 between 09:45 and 12:00. 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 two families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced high quality childcare with a childminder who was dedicated to meeting their needs.
- Children were happy and having fun.
- The childminder had a very good understanding of how children develop and learn.
- Children benefitted from a comfortable, homely and welcoming environment.
- Children were well supported and encouraged to achieve their potential.
- Children's emotional wellbeing benefitted from positive attachments.

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 experienced consistently warm, responsive and nurturing interactions which supported their emotional wellbeing. They appeared relaxed, settled and confident in the childminder's care. The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of the importance of building secure and trusting relationships, and knew each child and their family well. This enabled effective communication and a personalised approach that helped children feel safe, valued and respected. One parent shared, "I fully trust Susan with [my child]; she is extremely mothering and shows genuine care."

The childminder used recognised nutritional guidance, such as 'Setting the Table', to promote healthy eating habits. They provided a variety of home cooked meals and snacks for children, and made good use of seasonal produce from their own garden.

Mealtimes were a relaxed and sociable experience as children sat together and chatted with the childminder as they ate. We discussed ways to actively involve children in planning and preparing meals and snacks. This could enhance their learning of practical life skills through meaningful, hands on experiences. For example, peeling and chopping fruit and vegetables, and practising pouring drinks.

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 reviewed regularly with families. As a result, the childminder could respond quickly to changes in children's lives. This further encouraged strong relationships and meant children experienced a consistent and continuous approach to their care.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children benefitted from high quality and very well considered play and learning opportunities. The skilled childminder encouraged them to extend their thinking and deepen their learning through the use of effective questioning. The use of real life materials and interesting prompts sparked children's imagination and provoked their natural curiosity, enquiry and learning. For example, fine motor skills were being developed as children had fun stretching different types of elastic bands between two points on a board. The childminder asked them if it was easier or harder when they used thick and thin bands.

The childminder made very good use of both the local area and wider community to broaden children's experiences. Children had fun exploring nature as they visited the beach, woodland areas and places of interest. They also enjoyed Bookbug sessions 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.

Children's play and learning experiences were recorded through a range of methods, including digital daily records and within floorbooks. Observations and photographs documented children's learning and progress, and were shared with families using an online app. This supported the childminder to identify and plan appropriate next steps, ensuring learning opportunities were responsive to children's interests and developmental needs.

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 were cared for in a comfortable, welcoming and homely environment that offered them space to play, eat and relax. The dedicated playroom and living room were attractively presented and very well organised. This contributed to children feeling secure, valued and included.

Children's rights were promoted as they moved freely between rooms, accessing a range of high quality, authentic and engaging resources. Toileting facilities were located on the same floor, further supporting children's independence and self-care. The layout of the environment had been carefully considered to support child-led play and learning, and gave children a strong message that they mattered.

The property was very well maintained indoors and outdoors. Risk assessments were in place which helped to minimise potential hazards and promote children's safety. Infection prevention and control measures were effectively implemented. Regular cleaning of toys and resources, alongside handwashing at key times, meant we were satisfied that the spread of infection was reduced. As a result, children were cared for in a safe environment where their health and wellbeing was prioritised.

The back garden was fully enclosed and secure, providing children with an interesting space to explore and enjoy physical play. A variety of good quality resources supported meaningful outdoor experiences and encouraged an active lifestyle.

The childminder understood their responsibilities in relation to data protection and confidentiality. They asked families for permission before taking photographs and shared their policies with families using the service.

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 childminder demonstrated a clear commitment to delivering high-quality experiences for children and families. The vision, values and aims of the service were reflected in the warm, nurturing interactions, and caring relationships observed during the inspection. This created an emotionally supportive environment where children felt safe, secure and confident.

A reflective approach to practice was evident. The childminder regularly evaluated the quality of the service and used this to identify areas for improvement. Children and families were involved in the development of the service. Their views were gathered through ongoing observations, informal conversations and questionnaires, and were used alongside the childminder's own reflections to inform future improvement priorities. Feedback from families confirmed that they felt listened to and respected, with all respondents strongly agreeing that they were involved in a meaningful way in the development of the service.

Strong, trusting relationships had been established with children and families, underpinned by the childminder's knowledge of each child's individual needs and preferences. This supported a culture of continuous improvement where children's wellbeing and development were prioritised.

The childminder had established positive professional links with the local authority and the Scottish Childminding Association. Their partnership with Fife Council to deliver funded early learning and childcare further enhanced the quality of the service. These collaborative relationships supported ongoing reflection and professional development, contributing to sustained improvements in outcomes for children.

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 sensitively supported children as they learned to share and take turns. They interacted with children in a kind and respectful 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 demonstrated a strong commitment to improving their knowledge and skills. Their reflective approach to learning meant their practice remained current and was responsive to children's needs. The childminder recognised the positive impact their own learning could have on the quality of care they provided, stating, "Children deserve the best I can give." 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 childminder's practice and in the way they communicated with children. One family shared, "Susan is so welcoming and loving towards my child." As a result, children were happy, having fun and felt important.

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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