

Mackenzie, Mhairi Child Minding

Thurso

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 September 2022

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2003909143

Service no:
CS2003014600

About the service

The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six 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.

Mhairi McKenzie, also known as Diane, provides childminding from her detached house situated in a residential area of Thurso, close to the local amenities. The parts of the premises used for childminding are the living room, kitchen/diner, playroom and toilet. Children have access to a large garden area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 September, 2022 between 3.15pm and 5.30pm. 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- received feedback to online questionnaires from four families
- spoke with the childminder
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children received warm and nurturing care from the childminder who knew them and their families well.
- Children spent a lot of their time outside, exploring their local environment.
- The childminder should increase the range of natural and open ended resources to support children's developing curiosity and imagination.
- The childminder was skilled and used her knowledge to support children and their families.
- The childminder gathered parental feedback informally and should consider introducing more formal processes.

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?	4 - 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?

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.

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children received warm and nurturing support from the childminder. She was responsive to their needs, and it was clear she had developed strong bonds with the children in her care. This meant that children felt loved and valued.

Very effective sharing of personal information enabled the childminder to support children's overall wellbeing with understanding and compassion. One parent commented "My child receives the very best care from Diane." Parents were welcomed into the childminder's home when arriving and leaving, this supported detailed exchange of information about each child. As a result, children received the right care at the right time.

Snack and mealtimes were calm and relaxed. The childminder recognised the importance of daily routines as an opportunity for children to develop relationships and learn lifelong skills. Children sat around the dining table with the childminder. Some children used highchairs and others sat on chairs. This meant that children were supported to eat in a safe environment.

The childminder had developed strong and trusting relationships with families, supporting them when needed. She told us she felt able to support parents when they had concerns about their child's development and was flexible to meet their changing needs. One parent told us "Diane has been an invaluable support to our whole family." These strong relationships contributed to children developing a positive view of themselves.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children's learning and natural curiosity was stimulated in both the indoor and outdoor environments. We observed children laughing, happy and interacting with the childminder during play. During this inspection the childminder read children a book, using skilled questioning to extend children's thinking and consolidate their learning through play. A variety of toys were on offer providing children with opportunities to develop thinking, understanding and investigation. The childminder told us she planned to introduce more natural and loose parts to the playroom.

A well-equipped garden provided the children with a wide variety of play and learning experiences. For example, a mud kitchen where children could use their imagination and creativity. A raised bed provided an area for growing vegetables. Children experienced fresh air and exercise daily which supported their overall health and wellbeing.

Children had good access to their local community. They regularly visited local playgroups, went to local parks, took walks along the river and had recently been to an animal petting farm. Children were learning about the changing seasons as they experienced familiar places throughout the year. One parent told us "My child interacts with her peers, attends classes and has days out but also has the comfort and routine of the

childminder's house." This supported children to develop their confidence and an awareness of their local community, while taking part in play and learning experiences.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this quality indicator, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

The childminder provided a real home from home environment, which was clean, accessible and well ventilated. Children had access to a dedicated playroom as well as a living room, kitchen and bathroom. The playroom was cosy and furnished with comfortable furniture for the children to rest and relax on. A varied selection of age-appropriate toys and books were available for children to choose from. This supported children's choice and curiosity.

Risk assessments were in place and parental permission was sought for outings, trips, and events. This ensured risks were identified and children were kept safe. We discussed with the childminder keeping children safe when they were playing in the large outside garden that wrapped around the house, signposting her to the Care Inspectorates "SIMOA" campaign.

Appropriate systems were in place to manage information in line with general data protection requirements. The childminder was registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. This meant that children's information was stored securely.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this quality indicator, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

The childminder effectively shared information about how she delivered her service, her vision, values and aims, with parents and children. This meant that everyone had shared expectations.

The childminder had developed very positive and open relationships with parents. She listened to children and valued their views and choices. Parents and carers told us they receive regular updates from the childminder at drop off, pick up and throughout the day. This included updates on care routines, activities, and achievements. This supported parents and carers to feel included in the service. As a result, children felt valued as parents and carers were able to talk to them about their day and children were able to share their learning.

The childminder reflected on her practice by encouraging verbal feedback from parents and children, she found direct conversations and communication via technology, including social media apps, to be very effective. This supported good outcomes for both children and their families as the childminder was able to meet the wellbeing needs of each child in her care. We discussed the benefits of introducing a more formal approach to self-evaluation and signposted the childminder to the "Quality Framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare", available from the Care Inspectorate Hub.

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 experienced warmth and kindness in the childminder's care. She responded to children individually, supporting them in their play and to develop their emotional resilience. As a result, children were relaxed and happy in her care.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of child development and used her knowledge to support the families using her service. She was enthusiastic about the care she provided and the impact this had on the children and wanted the best outcomes for them, as a result children were supported to reach their potential.

The childminder had completed training in core areas, such as child protection, first aid and food hygiene, as well as training to keep children and families safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of this, she demonstrated a very good understanding of how to keep children safe while in her care. Parents told us they "felt completely at ease" when their children were with her. The childminder told us she had reviewed national best practice guidance and was using this to improve her service.

She worked very closely with other local childminders, sharing information and good practice between them, and was a member of Scottish Childminding Association. She told us this provided her with a good network of support, which ensured high quality practice and experiences 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.

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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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

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