

# Thomson, Dana Child Minding

Inverurie

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
13 December 2022

**Service provided by:**  
Dana Thomson

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003907082

**Service no:**  
CS2003020451

## About the service

Dana Thomson provides a childminding service from her property in a quiet residential area of Oldmeldrum. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16 of whom no more than three are not yet attending school and no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service is close to a local primary school ,shops, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in the kitchen/diner, play room and downstairs toilet. Children also have access to an enclosed rear garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 December 2022 between 10:15 and 14:00. 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 three parents of children who attended
- spoke with the childminder and children
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- The childminder was kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- The childminder knew the children well and supported their individual needs.
- The childminder had developed good relationships with parents, they felt they were well informed about their child's experience.
- The childminder plans to shape the vision of her service involving the families using it, promoting a shared vision and values, capturing what is important to everyone.
- The childminder reflected on practice however, now needs to implement a more formal approach to self-evaluation using recognised quality assurance tools.

## 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?	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

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

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.

We saw that positive relationships had been established between the childminder and the child in her care. During play there was lots of fun, chatting, encouragement and celebrating achievements. The childminder was kind, nurturing and patient in her approach, resulting in the child feeling relaxed and comfortable in her care.

The childminder knew the children she cared for well and talked confidently about their interests, personalities and how she was supporting them. The childminder told us she was supporting one of the children to recognise colours and numbers and we saw her provide opportunities for this through play, encouraging the exploration of a variety of resources.

Parents felt the childminder knew their children well and had made positive connections with them. They commented that the childminder took an interest beyond simply meeting their needs. They said she engaged with them as individuals and had taken the time to understand what interested the children.

The childminder was clearly in tune with the child's needs, responding to requests and picking up on their cues. Comfort and reassurance were given when needed contributing to positive attachments having been formed.

Mealtimes were observed to be a relaxed, unhurried experience with the child and the childminder sitting together eating and chatting. Lunch was provided by parents and snacks by the childminder. Snacks provided were healthy and nutritious and the child was given opportunities to make choices. The childminder encouraged independence and supported the child to peel a tangerine. The childminder was aware of and made reference to: 'Setting the Table' guidance. The childminder often did baking activities with the children which provided a number of valuable learning opportunities. We saw photographic evidence of these experiences.

Each child in the childminder's care had a personal plan. Children's wellbeing and progress was well supported through effective personal planning. These were completed with parents which supported effective information sharing and promoted a continuity of care for their children. Personal plans were updated regularly and used by the childminder to get to know the children and to plan to meet their needs. Parents said: "they were aware and kept very well informed of their children's personal plans. We see their folders and discuss with the childminder if there is anything we feel they need developed although the childminder is great at keeping this going."

The childminder had given consideration to the wellbeing indicators within the plans. This supported the childminder to consider the children's strengths as well as identify any obstacles and next steps around their health and wellbeing. The childminder had recognised the importance of safe guarding children, however, we discussed the use of chronologies within the plans to capture significant events in children's lives. These would highlight any potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues arising in the children's lives and ensure that appropriate actions had been taken to keep children safe and well.

The childminder had a system in place for managing the administration of medication. This included a medication policy that supported children's health and wellbeing as a means of obtaining parental permission. This permission form could be developed further to highlight the signs and symptoms in line with current best practice.

We did not observe a nappy change. The childminder spoke us through the service's procedure that supported children's dignity and effective infection control measures. We asked the childminder to review and update her policy to include her procedure for nappy changing which is in line with best practice guidance.

Children did not sleep or rest during our visit. Parents provided the childminder with details of their children's preferred sleeping arrangements to ensure consistency of care. The childminder was aware of best practice guidance and was working with the parents to ensure the comfort and safety of their children was a priority.

We found the childminder supported the children and families well. Parents spoke about how they felt well informed about their child's experiences and learning. Parents said there was a good communication system in place and important information, including how their children spent their day was always passed on at pick up time. Parents told us that: "the childminder regularly keeps us up to date with what they are doing and sends photos, some days they are super busy and she doesn't send a message but I get an update at pick up."

### 1.3 Play and learning

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.

During our visit the child present was able to lead their own play and was fully engaged playing with a range of toys and activities of their choice. The childminder joined in the play and used open ended questions during her interactions promoting curiosity and encouraging problem solving. We saw the childminder play with a child exploring different toy fruits and colours. She encouraged the child to sort the fruits in a variety of ways using questions like: "what about" and "can you find". This encouraged the child's thinking and extended their play.

The childminder told us that when the older children arrived they were confident about making choices in relation to toys, activities and snack themselves and made themselves very much at home. This contributed to the children being happy and settled.

The childminder had a good knowledge of child development and she talked about how she was supporting the children through the different stages of their development. She spoke about personal care and we observed the childminder encouraging independence and respecting dignity.

The childminder recognised the importance of promoting literacy and numeracy through the children's play. During a game with the child, we saw lovely examples of the childminder modelling and emphasising vocabulary with the names of animals, colours and counting. Engagement was positive, as a result the child was keen to repeat, match and count. There was lots of encouragement and celebration of success with the child clearly enjoying the game.

The childminder kept scrap books in the children's personal plans which recorded the children's experiences. These captured the wide variety of activities and experiences which the children had clearly enjoyed. It was clear from these, that the childminder had taken into account the children's interests and ideas, and had offered a wide range of activities. The childminder had made reference to the wellbeing indicators though within these and we could see that the children were progressing well and were happy and confident.

The childminder had recently started to use floor books. These contained the children's work, photos and descriptions of what the children had been exploring. Children contributed to the entries. We saw they had glued in leaves from their autumn walk. The childminder planned to use these more to gather the children's ideas, gauge their interests and use this to plan opportunities for them.

Children's opportunities for play and interactions were enhanced through connections with their community. They regularly attended toddler groups and sessions at the library. This encouraged the children to form positive relationships with others and enjoy stories, songs and rhyme. One of the parents said the childminder: "provides activities and asks the children to help to choose how their time is spent. She fills their days with active play and meets up with other childminders in the area so that the children benefit from wider social interaction."

The childminder recognised the importance of the outdoors to promote the children's health and wellbeing. The children weren't outside during our visit but had just returned from walking back from school. The childminder spoke about the many places they liked to visit and we saw photographic evidence of outings such as visiting the park, woods and feeding the ducks. They enjoyed exploring the local area and further afield.

## How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

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 environment was well maintained and secure. The children had use of most of the downstairs area of the house. This included the playroom, dining/kitchen and toilet. The child present was observed to move around freely with confidence and had the choice of where to play. The playroom was set up thoughtfully with shelves and easily accessible boxes for the children to independently choose their preferred resources.

A variety of resources to support different play experiences and age ranges were on offer. There was a large sofa where the children could sit and relax. A large car mat allowed the child to play on the floor comfortably. These all helped create a welcoming feel to the service.

The childminder used a variety of natural open ended resources and 'loose parts' to support children's creativity and imagination. We observed a child using tweezers to sort and count objects. We saw photos of 'tough trays' set up with provocations for learning, including open ended resources such as reels and wooden curtain hoops. The childminder spoke about how these opportunities supported the children's creative and imaginative play.

Outdoors the children had access to an enclosed back garden with a decked and grassed area. They could experience creative, imaginative and active play using the play house, mud kitchen, water tray and ride on toys. Although we did not see the children outdoors, the childminder told us they had access to the garden all year round and the children benefitted from being able to come and go to the outdoors as they pleased.

It was important to the childminder that the children felt at home in her setting and parents commented on this. One parent said: "I cannot express enough how happy I am with the care provided for my children, they are treated with the upmost care and respect and it really is a home from home service. My children are very comfortable going to the childminder's setting and are very excited at the activities they do." This contributed to the children feeling happy, safe and secure.

Infection control measures provided a safe environment for children. We observed good hand washing routines carried out by both the childminder and children at appropriate times. Paper towels were used to dry hands. Personal protective equipment was worn in line with best practice guidance. Effective cleaning was carried out to ensure the risk of infection was minimised.

Risk assessments were in place for indoor and outdoor environments and various activities. These supported the safety and wellbeing of the children and documented potential risks and measures in place to support a safe environment. We discussed with the childminder about talking to the children about being safe, and talked about how the children could become more involved in risk assessments. This would encourage them to access risk and think further about keeping themselves safe.

Documents for accidents and incidents were in place and the childminder was aware of the need to share these with parents and retain a copy. We discussed keeping a record of these for auditing purposes.

The childminder had completed GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) training and had a policy in place to support data protection. Children's personal information was stored securely in a locked box, which complied with relevant best practice.

The childminder had a 'ring door bell' at her front door. A device that has a built in camera and a two-way talk system. She had a policy in place which clearly stated the purpose of this, notifying parents of any changes to the use. This contributed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and families.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

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

The childminder had a vision for the service which was shared with families. We discussed how this could be further developed and shaped by those using the service, promoting a shared vision and values, capturing what is important to everyone.

The childminder understood the importance of using the views of children and families to inform planning and the development of the service. Parents and children were regularly given questionnaires to gather their views on the service provided. Children's views were sought through a children's questionnaire, using faces to show how they felt about the childminder's service. For example: one family had been exploring number at home so the childminder had purchased Christmas number games to help support this child's number recognition.

Success and achievements were regularly shared with families. The use of technology allowed the childminder to update the parents about their child's time at the service. The childminder had also sent photos of their children's achievements to ensure parents felt included and involved in their children's milestones. One parent said: "communication as a whole is exceptional. I am always kept in the loop of what the plans for the day are and what they have done when I pick up at end of day. I cannot thank the childminder enough for the great communication I get."

We acknowledged that the childminder reflected daily on her practice and the service provided and used this to bring about positive changes to outcomes for children and families. The childminder now needs to implement a more formal approach to self-evaluation using recognised quality assurance tools. This would inform an improvement plan to ensure continuous improvement.

The childminder had a range of policies and procedures in place supporting her to provide a quality service. Parents said the childminder always kept them up to date on any policy changes which contributed to them feeling included and well informed.

## How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

### 4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values

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 kind, warm and responsive in her approach, which enabled the children to feel valued, loved and secure. We found the childminder to be enthusiastic and motivated and our discussions highlighted that she was passionate about her role.

The childminder joined in children's play and recognised the importance of making it fun. We observed sensitive and responsive interactions as she settled children and encouraged them to feel more confident about having visitors in the house.

The childminder is funded by the local authority to provide care for children and families. She had recently completed a recognised child care qualification (SCQF 7). She had a clear understanding of how children develop and learn. She discussed how she was supporting the children's development and parents said: "the childminder was very proactive in supporting the children's development through play, craft and just talking with them." They said: "they sometimes highlight things they are trying to focus on for example: numbers and they know the childminder will try and incorporate this with whatever they are doing, but a lot of the time she does it without being asked."



The childminder made good use of professional development opportunities. She had recently completed training courses including: food hygiene and Infection, Prevention and Control. The childminder had also completed courses through the SCMA (Scottish Childminding Association) in areas of interest such as promoting positive behaviour and improving children's learning through play. The childminder had completed a record of professional development including information about the courses. The childminder should now take time to reflect on what she had learned and record how this may impact on her setting and improve outcomes for children.

The childminder had a good knowledge and understanding of best practice guidance and was able to talk about how she was going to use this knowledge to improve the setting and experiences for children. This ensured the childminder was continually improving her practice and children received high quality interactions and experiences which we observed.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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?	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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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