

# Little Otters Childminding Child Minding

Forres

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
9 February 2023

**Service provided by:**

**Service provider number:**  
SP2018990013

**Service no:**  
CS2018368156

## About the service

Mrs Wardlaw is registered to provide a care service to six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, 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 is situated in a small hamlet based in a rural location close to woodlands and a short drive to a local town and amenities. Children are cared for in a kitchen/diner and an adjacent lounge. A small secure garden is accessed from the rear and there is a large play area to the front of the property.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 February 2023. 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:

- communicated with a parent;
- spoke with two children;
- spoke with the childminder;
- observed practice and children's experiences; and
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

Children had formed positive relationships with the childminder, who clearly knew the children very well.

Children's information was recorded in the personal plan that helped the childminder to meet their needs.

Children enjoyed being able to make choices and lead their own play. They were clearly having fun together and had formed friendships that supported their wellbeing and learning.

Children benefited from being cared for in a clean, comfortable and well furnished setting that had ample space for their needs.

The childminder was reflective of their practice and documentation was well organised.

The childminder's warmth and kindness towards the children enabled them to feel valued, loved and secure.

## 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

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

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were helped to feel safe and cared for as the childminder provided warm and nurturing interactions that supported their overall wellbeing. Children had formed positive relationships with the childminder, who clearly knew the children very well. Children were able to self-regulate when sharing and followed instructions, as the childminder remained calm and reflective in their responses towards them.

The childminder was not caring for any children that had any personal care needs or needed to sleep, as only school age children used the service. However, suitable arrangements were in place should such needs arise. Children were able to relax on the sofas in the lounge and they were clearly comfortable to make such decisions for themselves.

Children enjoyed eating their snack together following their arrival from school. There was a relaxed atmosphere that was unhurried, so that it was a caring and positive social experience. Children chatted with each other and the childminder. Foods reflected children's individual and dietary needs as it was provided by parents. Children had water in their own containers although the childminder offered to fill them, to help ensure that children remained hydrated.

The childminder had got to know the needs of the children well through meaningful conversations with parents. Children's information was recorded in the personal plan that helped the childminder to meet their needs. The childminder monitored children's wellbeing in consultation with parents and had updated the care plan to reflect changes in need. Recording the views of parents and children, where possible, would also be beneficial for the purposes of review. The childminder also had an understanding of the purpose of chronologies, that detailed significant events and helped to direct actions to support children well.

Parents told us that the childminder was in tune with their child, picking up if they were not quite themselves and supporting them. Parents felt well informed and were happy with communication that helped to keep information up to date. They also liked that the children were able to play outside a lot.

### 1.3 Play and Learning

Children enjoyed being able to make choices and lead their own play. Children told us how they liked playing board games together and how they had enjoyed a game of Monopoly the previous day. Children chose to play a game of chess and they were comfortable to remind each other how to play and also teach a child who did not know how to play the game. Such activities continued to support children's language, literacy, and numeracy skills.

Children were clearly having fun together and had formed friendships that supported them in their play. They were comfortable and moved around independently; at times they chose to relax in the lounge and have some quiet time or chat together.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were also enhanced through outdoor play, both at the service and in the local community. The location of the childminder's home adjacent to woodlands and the natural environment was conducive to this. Children were offered the opportunity to play outside during the inspection but they chose to continue to play activities indoors. They told us that they liked playing ball games together. Children may benefit from a regeneration of loose parts (no fixed purpose) materials that inspire imagination and problem solving. Ref: Loose parts play (a tool kit) [hub.careinspectorate.com](http://hub.careinspectorate.com)

The childminder helped children to learn from each other, play together and to have an understanding of safety and risk. Children were helped to extend their thinking and find their own resolutions as the childminder talked with them and used prompts/questions during their play.

Children's emotional resilience, wellbeing and right to play was supported through the childminder's nurturing approach and meaningful relationship with them and their families.

### How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

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

Children benefited from being cared for in a clean, comfortable and well furnished setting, that had ample space for their needs. To ensure that infection control procedures remain robust, all children should be encouraged to follow good hand hygiene as stated in the service policy.

Windows provided ample ventilation and natural light, that contributed to children's psychological wellbeing.

The childminder kept the premises, activities both in the home and outside, under regular review to assess and manage risk. Written risk assessments also helped to support the safety and security of the children. To help ensure that any changes were assessed and updated, we suggested that risk assessments were reviewed at least annually. Children's information was securely stored and managed. The childminder had completed first aid training so that they were able to respond appropriately should an accident occur.

Children had ample space to play and explore. They used the large table in the kitchen/diner when having snack and playing board games. The large lounge had sofas that enabled children to relax and rest, or take part in quieter activities such as reading or just chatting together. The arrangement of furniture provided space for the children to enjoy floor activities.

The secure garden to the rear of the property was accessible from the kitchen. A large open play space was accessed from the front door and easily visible; it provided lots of space for active play and exploration. Play equipment included a climbing frame, swing and football net.

### How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

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

The childminder had records that were well organised and readily accessible. They had clear policies that supported them in running the service. We suggested that keeping them under review and aligning them with the Health and Social Care Standards, would also provide a basis for evaluation of the service.

The childminder was reflective of their practice. Following a period of being inactive, they had chosen to adjust their service to out of school care, which met the needs of children and families. Formats for recording had been reviewed and amended so that information was clear and readily accessible to families.

We spoke with the childminder about the benefits of recording the changes as they occurred to support a continuous approach to improvement. Changes could be as a result of seeking the views of parents and/or children, evaluation of training or reading best practice guidance. We referred the childminder to the Care Inspectorate early years improvement programme - [hub.careinspectorate.com](http://hub.careinspectorate.com).

The childminder was motivated to provide a service that met the needs of children and families well. The childminder had formed meaningful relationships with parents and children and responded to their views.

Parents told us that the childminder asked for their feedback at times but they had no areas for improvement to discuss. They felt comfortable to speak with the childminder if they had any concerns or anything to discuss.

## How good is our staff team?

### 4 - Good

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

The childminder had completed training relevant to their role that included first aid and child protection. The childminder was familiar with best practice documents on the Care Inspectorate hub. We discussed how reviewing guidance documents could also support practice and individual learning. We suggested that use of a reflective journal would help to identify the benefit and impact of their training/learning and the difference it made to children.

The childminder was clear about their role and responsibilities. During our discussion with the childminder it was clear that they had adapted their practice, taking account of the best interest of the children.

The childminder was responsive to the individual needs of the children; they were able to initiate conversations with the children that were courteous and respectful. The childminder's warmth and kindness towards the children enabled them to feel valued, loved and secure.

The childminder recognised the importance of children having fun in their play that supported their development and learning.

## 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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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