

Little Springers Childminding Child Minding

Bonnyrigg

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 April 2023

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2019990671

Service no:
CS2019376304

About the service

Sarah Falconer provides Little Springers Childminding service from their home in a residential area of Midlothian. The home is close to local primary schools, shops, parks, and other amenities. The areas used to provide the service are an entrance hall, lounge, kitchen area and upstairs toilet. There is an enclosed garden to the front and the rear of the property.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children under 16 years, of whom no more than three are not yet of an age to attend primary school, and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. These numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family. The childminder is in partnership with Midlothian Council to provide funded early learning and childcare for eligible children.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 19 April 2023 between 09:15 and 10:30. We then returned to the service on the same day between 12:45 and 15:30. To prepare for this inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluations we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received written feedback from three families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's routines and experiences
- reviewed documents.

Feedback was given to the childminder 20 April 2023.

Key messages

- The childminder knew children well and had a kind and caring approach.
- Positive relationships had been built and children felt comfortable and confident within the service.
- The childminder made good use of the wider community to enhance children's experiences.
- Infection prevention and control practices must be improved to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.
- The childminder must ensure that personal plans are kept up to date and reviewed in line with legislation.
- Sleep arrangements should be reviewed and developed in line with good practice guidance.
- The environment should be improved to ensure that children consistently experience a calm, welcoming and respectful environment.
- The outdoor space should be developed to ensure the garden is a safe and secure environment for children.
- The childminder should develop a quality assurance process that addresses key areas of practice and links to improved outcomes for children.
- The childminder should ensure they participate in effective ongoing self-evaluation and meaningful professional development opportunities. These new skills and knowledge should be used to inform their daily practice and have a direct impact on outcomes for children.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	2 - Weak
How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were comfortable, confident and happy within the service. Children were approaching the childminder for comfort and reassurance. The childminder knew children well and had a kind and caring approach. One parent shared, "My child would live there, they are so great with my child and they make everything fun and a great learning opportunity". It was clear that strong relationships had been built between the children, childminder and families.

All families completed a personal plan for their child as part of the registration process when they began with the service. However, these had not been updated and the information held was out of date and did not reflect children's current individual likes, dislikes, needs and wishes. The childminder must ensure that all information held within a child's personal plan is up to date and accurate. This would support the childminder to respond to individual children's needs. This information must be reviewed when changes occur or as a minimum every six months in line with legislation. To support this we directed the childminder to the Care Inspectorate, 'Guide for Providers on Personal Planning: Early Learning and Childcare' (2021) (see requirement 1).

Sleep arrangements for young children should be reviewed to ensure that sleep practices are in line with best practice. One child sleeping in a pushchair outside in the garden was not regularly checked. We discussed how the childminder might manage sleep arrangements for children, and introduce more appropriate equipment to support safe, comfortable sleep routines. All children should be closely supervised and regularly checked whilst sleeping so that they remain safe and comfortable (see area for improvement 1).

Children sat at a low level table facing the wall for their snack time. The childminder was engaging in conversation with children, however, they were having to turn around on their stool to try and look at the childminder. Moving forward, the childminder should consider where children are sitting and how they support a positive social experience for all children. Children were not involved with the planning or preparation of snack. This meant there were missed opportunities to promote independence and children's choice. The childminder should develop mealtimes that offer children the opportunity to be involved in the planning, preparation and serving of mealtimes where appropriate. This would contribute to children developing their confidence and self esteem as they show themselves to be capable, independent learners.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children's play and learning opportunities were enhanced through use of their local and wider community. Children attended a variety of different play opportunities across the week. For example, attended forest play sessions once a week. One child shared their favourite part about the forest sessions with us, "I like the mud kitchen the best". This supported children to develop a sense of belonging and feel a valued member of their local community. While we recognise that children had access to their wider community, children were unable to access outdoor play opportunities within the service. We raised our concerns relating to the outdoor space within the service. We have reported on this in Key Question 2.

Children were able to select from a variety of resources and loose parts to support and extend their own play. For example, the childminder added some open ended resources and sensory materials such as herbs into a tuff tray, this supported some children who were showing an interest in dinosaurs. Children began to design and create their own dinosaur environment. Children spoke about the different types of dinosaurs and what they ate to keep them healthy. The childminder supported this play with open ended questions and showed a genuine interest and enthusiasm in the children's play. The children began to develop a story through their play. This involved them taking turns, negotiating roles and sharing ideas. This supported children to use their imagination and creativity as they developed their early literacy and social skills through their role play.

The childminder used a responsive planning approach to support children's learning. The childminder was able to share examples of ways in which she had extended children's current interests. For example, a child had been interested in building their own train track. The childminder had introduced a variety of additional pieces which allowed the child to explore how to build at different lengths and heights. The childminder was able to recognise the early mathematical learning that had come from this experience, as they reflected on the concepts that the child had explored such as size, order, shape, height, length. One parent told us, "If there is something my child wants to do which isn't out readily available then they set out whatever it is and this is something I have witnessed on many occasions when collecting my child". Moving forward, the childminder should develop the recording of their responsive planning approach and begin to involve children within this process. This could support children to reflect on their learning experiences while encouraging conversations and the recording of children's voice, interests and learning.

Requirements

1. To ensure children's wellbeing and development is effectively supported, by the 22 May 2023, the childminder must ensure that all personal plans include up to date and meaningful information about how children's care and needs will be met. They must ensure planned review dates are carried out at least once every six months in consultation with parents or sooner if a child's support needs change.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) and Regulation 5(1)(2) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's safety and comfort, children's sleep arrangements should be reviewed and developed. This should include the close supervision and regular checking of children as they sleep. The childminder should review their sleep policy and update this in line with good practice guidance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.21);

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

How good is our setting?

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children's safety and comfort was compromised due to the poor quality of the home environment. The bathroom was clean and had appropriate resources to maintain hygiene routines. We saw children were supported to wash their hands. However, on the morning visit we found areas of the home to be disorganised and in need of attention. The lounge area was not presented in an inviting way with many toys and general household items cluttered across the space. This limited children's opportunities for play. Furthermore, the kitchen and hallway were cluttered and, in some places, not cleaned to a suitable standard.

We returned in the afternoon and found small improvements had been made. The lounge area had been reorganised and resources were more accessible for children. A small low level table had been introduced with mark making opportunities for children. Although some areas had been tidied, there remained issues with the kitchen, where the childminder prepared meals and snacks for the children. For example, dog beds being in the kitchen area, dirt on the floor, dirty dishes and large amounts of paperwork and clutter across the worktops required attention. To ensure children experience a consistently safe and nurturing environment the childminder must ensure the home is clean and well maintained at all times. The childminder must develop a risk assessment for the environment so that it effectively identifies risks and supports her to take action to mitigate these at all times. The childminder must continually review the spaces and take appropriate action when needed (see requirement 1).

The childminder had two dogs who were kept in the kitchen area. However, due to there not being a safety gate between the living room and kitchen, the childminder had to close the door when going in and out of the kitchen. This meant that children were left unsupervised as the childminder left the living room space to attend to food preparation in the kitchen. The childminder explained they had removed the safety gate during a holiday period and had failed to reinstate this. The childminder must always ensure the safe supervision of children at all times. We asked the childminder to address this immediately. This would support children to be safely supervised and support children to communicate with the childminder while they moved between the kitchen and living room space (see requirement 1).

The outdoor area was considered as part of the registered space that was to be used by children. However, children did not have access to the outdoor space. At our last inspection we made an area for improvement to request that the childminder developed their outdoor space to ensure it was safe for children to use. The childminder had not taken steps to develop the outdoor space. The garden space was unkept and unsafe for children to be in. We found dog faeces within the outdoor garden space. While we recognised that children were able to access outdoor experiences through the use of the wider community, it is important that the outdoor space registered to the service is a safe, secure environment which compliments children's play, learning and development.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place (see area for improvement 1).

Requirements

1. By 12 May 2023, the provider must ensure children experience an environment that is safe, clean and comfortable.

To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) the environment is organised in a way that supports children's safety
- b) enhanced cleaning takes place in line with current Covid-19 guidance and good practice guidance for infection, prevention and control in early years environments is understood and followed at all times
- c) the environment risk assessments are further developed so they clearly reflect how risks are reduced
- d) any necessary maintenance is carried out and appropriate safety equipment installed to ensure children's safety.

This is to comply with Regulation 10 (2) (b), (c) and (d) (Fitness of Premises) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

Areas for improvement

1. The childminder should develop the outdoor play space to ensure children are safe in their environment and have access to resources and equipment that encourage investigation, creativity and exploration.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.' (HSCS 1.32);

'My environment is secure and safe.' (HSCS 5.17).

How good is our leadership?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We found gaps in key areas of practice that should be identified by quality assurance processes. For example, personal plans had not been updated with key information and there were significant gaps in infection, prevention and control practices. We also found that the service had failed to take any action towards the area for improvement that was set at their last inspection. The childminder should develop a quality assurance system that covers all key areas of practice. This system should support ongoing improvements and help the childminder to sustain an acceptable standard of practice on a day-to-day basis. This would contribute to children experiencing a quality environment that is safe, secure and responsive to their individual needs (see area for improvement 1).

Children and parents were respected through effective communication. The childminder used a variety of different social media and technology platforms to share regular updates and photos which helped keep parents involved in their child's experiences at the service. Good communication between the childminder and parents also helped children to experience a continuity of care between home and the service. As a result, positive relationships had been built.

There was no evidence that the childminder had carried out any self-evaluation. To support self-evaluation, we directed the childminder to the good practice guidance: 'A quality framework for daycare, childminding and school aged children' (Care Inspectorate, 2022) and 'Your Childminding Journey' (Care Inspectorate, 2017). Both documents would support the childminder on their improvement journey and begin to develop their reflective practice skills and carry out meaningful self-evaluation. This would support them to reflect and evaluate the service and respond to the changing needs of children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. The childminder should develop a robust monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the quality of the service is monitored and assessed regularly.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

How good is our staff team?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder needed to develop their knowledge and understanding of current guidance, best practice documents and legislation. This was evident in a number of areas across the service and was having a negative impact on the quality of children's experiences and wellbeing. For example, children were at potential risk of harm due to the childminder's lack of knowledge of good infection prevention and control practices. The childminder should source appropriate training that targets and addresses gaps in their own practice. The childminder should be able to demonstrate the impact and how this developed their practice to improve outcomes for children (see area for improvement 1).

The childminder had attended mandatory training such as, first aid and child protection. The childminder could confidently talk through their child protection procedures and the positive impact the training had on their confidence in this area. While the childminder had attended different training sessions such as forest play training, we did not see this translated into the practice within the environment. For example, children were unable to play in the garden space as the childminder had failed to develop this, as a result it was unsuitable and unsafe. The childminder should ensure that new knowledge and skills they acquire through professional development opportunities are brought back to the service and have a direct impact on outcomes for children within the home environment. We signposted the childminder to the range of best practice documents available on the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' to enhance their knowledge. This would contribute to children experiencing a quality early learning and childcare service that supports them to thrive.

Areas for improvement

1. Outcomes for children should be improved through ongoing effective self-evaluation and professional development. The childminder should ensure that new skills and knowledge acquired is translated into practice and has a positive impact on outcomes for children within the home environment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The childminder should develop the outdoor play space to ensure children are safe in their environment and have access to resources and equipment that encourage investigation, creativity and exploration.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.' (HSCS 1.32); and 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 2 May 2022.

Action taken since then

The service had taken no action towards this area for improvement.

This area for improvement had not been met and remains in place.

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?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	3 - Adequate
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate

How good is our leadership?	2 - Weak
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	2 - Weak

How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	2 - Weak

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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