

# McIntosh, Heather Child Minding

Dundee

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
16 May 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Heather McIntosh

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003900126

**Service no:**  
CS2003000603

## About the service

Heather McIntosh provides a service from her home in Dundee. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's children.

The service is based in a residential area of Dundee and is close to local parks, schools and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 May 2023 between 08:30 and 11:30. The inspection was carried out by an 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
- reviewed documents
- spoke with children and gathered the views of families using the service.

## Key messages

- The childminder demonstrated a nurturing and respectful ethos, where children were listened to and valued.
- Children's individual needs and preferences were catered for, as the childminder was responsive to their interests and stage of development.
- Children had regular access to the local community exploring walks, woods, visits to the library and science centres.
- Play was child led and children's choices were respected, valued and acted upon.
- Risk assessments should be developed, reviewed and updated, at least annually, to reflect the provision provided.
- The childminder should develop self-evaluation processes to formalise the continuous improvement of the service using best practice documentation.

## 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.

### Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions with a childminder who understood their needs and preferences. Children were happy, settled, and confident to explore their surroundings. One parent commented, 'My child loves going to Heather's'. The childminder interacted with children very well offering praise and encouragement. They were kind, friendly and nurturing, as they modelled manners with children and checked in on their wellbeing throughout the session. This demonstrated that children felt safe and loved in the childminder's care.

Children had personal plans in place that supported their wellbeing, preferences, and routines. These had not been updated in some time and we found some information to be incomplete. Plans should be completed in full and reviewed regularly with children and parents, to ensure the information held is relevant and accurate. The childminder had a very good understanding of children's individual needs and worked closely with families and other services to ensure a consistent approach. This meant that children experienced continuity of care and support that promoted positive outcomes.

Children's dignity and privacy were maintained during nappy changing. Infection prevention and control measures were followed, which reduced the risk of any spread of infection. The childminder was responsive to the child's needs and shared nurturing conversations during the experience. This supported the child to feel safe and loved.

Snack provided a calm, unhurried and nurturing experience for children to develop their life skills. Children were enthusiastic to spread their own toast. The childminder sat with children promoting positive conversations and role modelling. Appropriate seating was provided to ensure children could access snack at the right stage. As a result, children experienced positive mealtimes.

### Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children had fun and they experienced high-quality play and learning, as they were asked daily what they would like to do, which was supported by the childminder. A range of experiences supported children to develop their curiosities and imaginations. For example, sensory play materials were shared with children after snack and one child commented, 'It's like spider webs. It's dripping'. This meant that children developed their imaginations within meaningful play opportunities.

Opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy learning were naturally embedded across the service and interactions. When on the school run, the childminder engaged children's interest in looking for snails, talking about their shape, size and colour. As a result, children had opportunities to progress their literacy and numeracy skills.

The childminder used their knowledge of children's interests to plan for the activities provided. As the childminder was an active participant in children's play, they were able to naturally respond to and add to their experiences. For example, when playing with the binoculars, the child looked up and the childminder asked if they could see the stars and what they looked like. This meant that children were able to develop their imaginations and wonder of the world.

Outings supported children to develop their confidence and social skills. The childminder made effective use of the community, with photos evidencing visits to play parks and science centres. The childminder shared that they went to the library and local woods regularly, to ensure children had access to fresh air. This supported the children to access a different range of play experiences, further developing their health, wellbeing and physical skills.

The childminder knew children very well and used this knowledge to support them when interacting with them. They knew when to step back from children's play experiences, which demonstrated their knowledge of child development. They had a very good understanding of strategies to support children with additional needs. A lanyard with symbols was used to support children's communication and understanding of routines. This meant that children received the right care and learning to meet their individual needs.

Children's records of development were based on the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, which are, safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included and were evidencing their progress. Children's portfolios evidenced their experiences within the childminder's care. We suggested these could be further developed to consider children's skills, learning and possible next steps. This would ensure children had opportunities to progress and achieve.

## How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefited from being cared for in a comfortable, clean, well-furnished and homely environment. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered. One parent shared that they felt the environment was, 'Very homely and comforting'. Ample ventilation and natural light contributed to children's wellbeing.

Resources were accessible for the children to independently select, and others were stored in places that the children could identify and ask for. A range of resources developed children's curiosities, imaginations and fine motor skills. For example, children were enthusiastically engaged in using tweezers to move loose parts from one space to another. Sensory resources were provided to engage children's interests and had recently been developed to consider varying purposes, such as fidget toys and texture exploration. This demonstrated that children's individual needs and interests were catered for.

At the time of the inspection, the garden area was not in use as maintenance work was needed. The childminder made effective use of the community, as they recognised the importance of children's physical and emotional wellbeing through regular exercise.

Effective procedures were in place to promote infection prevention and control. This was reflected in the childminder's high standards of cleanliness and presentation within the homely environment. To reduce the risk of infection and support children's health, regular handwashing took place, which included before eating.

The childminder was confident in explaining how children were kept safe when they were in their home and local community. The childminder should now develop their risk assessments to record more of the measures in place to minimise risk. Risk assessments should consider hazards, risk level and actions taken to reduce these. This would ensure children and families fully understand how the childminder is supporting them to stay safe and healthy (**see area for improvement 1**).

## Areas for improvement

1. To keep children safe, the childminder should identify all risk and hazards within the indoor and outdoor environment and address them. Written risk assessments should inform visual risk assessing and be regularly reviewed. The risk assessments should be updated at least annually or as required.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.17).

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

### Quality Indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder's commitment and dedication to supporting families meant children experienced quality care, play and learning. One parent commented, 'Heather is a very lovely and caring childminder. My child's needs are always met'. A shared aims and objectives between the childminder and the families who used the service, contributed to the effective running of the service.

The childminder had daily communications with families at drop off and collection to discuss and share key messages about children and their experiences. We asked that the childminder continue to develop methods to engage families in the improvement of the service. This would ensure that families views were used to design the service provided.

The childminder informally consulted with children daily as they were responsible for choosing the resources that they engaged in. They shared older children liked to engage in making loom bands and participating in craft. We observed the childminder asking children what they would like for snack. As a result, children's choices were respected.

The childminder used their knowledge of their children and families to informally develop their practice. They regularly reviewed different websites for ideas to engage children's interests. For example, a range of sensory treasure baskets had recently been introduced to engage children with additional support needs interests. The childminder should consider more ways to evaluate the service and develop improvement methods and self-evaluation. This would encourage the childminder to reflect on what was working well in their service and what could be improved. This would also ensure children and families continue to have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development of the service **(see area for improvement one)**.

Whilst there were policies in place, there was a need for the childminder to review and update these in line with best practice guidance and documentation. We suggested changes to the child protection, medication, accident and incident and complaints policies. This would ensure that policies and procedures were effective in supporting the service and maintaining children's safety.

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that quality assurance processes impact positively on outcomes for children, they should be developed to help identify and inform improvement planning. This should include, but is not limited to:

- developing self-evaluation processes
- reflecting on areas for improvement
- updating policies and procedures
- reflecting on best practice guidance.

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?

**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.

#### Quality Indicator 4.1 - Staff skills, knowledge, and values

The childminder's calm and caring approach ensured that they were responsive to meeting children's individual needs. This contributed positively to children's overall wellbeing and helped them to feel settled, relaxed and loved in their care. One parent commented, 'She treats the children as if they were her own and has formed an amazing bond with my daughter'. Children's rights were at the heart of the childminding experience, as each child was cared for and respected as an individual. The childminder modelled the language of positive choices, which enabled children to learn the rules and expectations. This meant that children were able to develop their life skills.

The childminder had a clear understanding of how children develop and learn. They valued each child as an individual and supported their preferred style of learning and play. Literacy and numeracy were promoted naturally through play at the right stage for each child. This ensured children received the care and support that was right for them.

Children were always well supervised and the childminder engaged children in conversation as they moved between rooms to complete tasks. This meant that children's safety was maintained.

The childminder had recently updated training in child protection and first aid. They made effective use of websites to support the service delivery. We suggested the childminder continue to access training to further support the ongoing improvement of the service. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate HUB to develop their knowledge of best practice. Training should be evaluated to record the impact on the childminder's practice and outcomes for children. This would ensure any training participated in meaningfully promoted the development of the service and outcomes 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](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?	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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