

Homestead Childminding Service Child Minding

Aboyne

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 October 2023

Service provided by:
Susan Nicoll

Service provider number:
SP2016987848

Service no:
CS2016345658

About the service

Homestead is a childminding service provided from the childminder's home in Aboyne. The service is registered to provide a childminding service to care for a maximum of seven 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 children in the childminder's family.

The downstairs area of the property is used for the purpose of childminding and included a lounge/dining room, kitchen/dining area, toilet facilities and the fully enclosed garden. The service is close to local primary school, community centre, park and woodland areas.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 31 October 2023 between 09:00 and 12:00. 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:

- gathered feedback about the service from three families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and relaxed in the childminder's care. The childminder was very responsive to children, providing caring interactions.
- Children are cared for in a welcoming and nurturing environment.
- Children had regular access to fresh air and exercise as they had fun exploring the local community.
- The childminder was committed and enthusiastic about their role. They communicated well with families to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- The childminder was motivated to learn and improve their practice, whilst promoting positive outcomes for children.
- To support continuous improvement, the childminder should continue to develop robust approaches to self-evaluation.

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

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 were happy, comfortable and having fun in the setting. The childminder had developed positive relationships with children which resulted in them being confident in their care. The childminder knew children well and described the individual care that each child received. A parent commented, "Susan is very approachable and flexible. Kids feel safe and happy when with Susan."

Personal plans were in place for each child. These plans were detailed and included an all about me section which provided information relating to each child's current interests, needs and wishes. These plans were regularly reviewed to keep them up-to-date and current. This ensured that the childminder had accurate and current information to fully meet the needs of children. All parents either agreed or fully agreed that they are fully involved in my child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan.

The childminder and the children enjoyed eating together in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere, ensuring a caring and positive social experience. They sat together and talked. The childminder used this as an opportunity to support language development, for example, repeating words back to children and introducing new words. There were some opportunities for independence and we discussed how these could be further developed. The childminder was focused on all children and could respond immediately should an emergency, such as choking, occur.

Nappy changing procedures ensured children were safe from risk of infection. The childminder spoke to and sang songs with children throughout the process, providing a nurturing experience. They used personal protective equipment (PPE) effectively and helped children to wash their hands. The childminder's practices ensured children's privacy and dignity was well considered.

The childminder understood the importance of promoting good sleeping habits. They provided safe places for children to sleep and rest, promoting their overall health and wellbeing.

Accidents and incidents were recorded and shared with parents effectively. The childminder had appropriate medication procedures and records in place supporting children to be safe and healthy.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were leading their own play as they were able to self-select from a variety of age-appropriate toys and resources. The childminder had considered the ages, and stages of development of children attending the service when providing resources. They had a good knowledge of children's current interests and ensured appropriate resources were available to support and extend these interests. As a result, children experienced play and learning opportunities that were relevant to them. A parent told us, "Kids do different things after school, from crafts, play time, or just chilling."

Language skills were developed through repetition of simple words to encourage children to copy these words and make sounds. This took place throughout all play and learning experiences. The childminder

supported children in their play encouraging and challenging learning. They incorporated open-ended questions throughout play to encourage and develop children's curiosity and problem solving. For example, we observed a child playing with a car and the childminder helped to make a ramp for it to go down. As a result, the child was engaged for an extended period and was supported to investigate through play. The childminder offered appropriate praise and encouragement when the child experimented with the ramp, enabling the child to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Children benefitted from the childminder's knowledge of child development, supporting them to achieve their full potential. They enjoyed their play as the childminder planned experiences based on observations and knowledge of their interests. The childminder used floorbooks to document experiences and learning which were accessible to children. As a result, children were offered challenge and offered opportunities to lead and revisit learning.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted with daily access to the outdoors. The childminder made good use of the outdoor space and community resources, such as park, local green space, woodland walks and use of the local library. These provided children with increased opportunity for physical activity, social interactions and promoted their literacy skills.

How good is our setting?

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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a warm, comfortable and homely environment which helped them feel welcome, safe and secure. Play spaces were clean, bright and well ventilated. They had been carefully planned to meet children's needs and help them to feel included. A parent commented, "Susan provides a home from home for a daughter. There's a good variety of activities on offer but at the same the setting provides the kind of pastoral care that would be hard to replicate via any other forms of childcare."

Children's stages of development, interests and curiosities were well considered and reflected in the selection of resources on offer. The toys and resources were easily accessible which promoted choice and enabled children to be independent in their play and learning. We discussed how children would benefit from having more opportunities to play with open-ended and natural materials to encourage a sense of wonder.

The childminder's house was very well-maintained. A full range of risk assessments were in place to identify hazards and put appropriate measures in place to reduce risks. The childminder had used a risk benefit approach to assess the risks and minimise dangers to children. As a result, children were supported to take safe risks in their play.

The childminder demonstrated good practice in infection prevention and control. They modelled good hand hygiene and effective cleaning practices. Appropriate cleaning materials were used, supporting children's health and wellbeing.

Children's information was securely stored and confidentiality maintained. Sensitive information was only shared with those who needed it to meet children's needs. As a result, children's information was protected and storage complied with relevant best practice.

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 aims and objectives of the service were in place to promote a shared vision between the childminder and families. We suggested when reviewing these in future, the childminder consults with the children and families using the service, supporting them to feel valued and included.

Children and families experienced a welcoming, homely ethos from an experienced childminder who valued partnership working to meet their needs. Children's views were sought daily through discussions as they were involved in deciding how they spent their day. Families were kept informed of children's learning and success through updates on the 'minding kids' app and daily chats at drop off and pick up times.

Opportunities for parents to provide their views were gathered through the use questionnaires. Regular consultation with parents should now be developed further to gather information specific to aspects of provision linked with the childminder's own self-evaluation. We discussed how questions could be framed and linked to the quality framework. Any feedback should be gathered and used to support improvements and progress fed back to parents. This would support continuous engagement and further improve outcomes for children.

The childminder was in the early stages of using 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' to evaluate their service. The childminder reflected informally on a regular basis and we discussed how this could be developed. Further development of self-evaluation practices will support the childminder to reflect on how the service can improve, whilst offering opportunity to recognise what may be working well. This will support improvement planning whilst considering families' and children's views and ideas.

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 (childminders)

The childminder was child-centred and responsive to the child's interests. Suitable praise and encouragement were offered to children with the childminder knowing when to step back to allow children to try out their ideas whilst being safe as they played. This supported children to learn new skills. A parent told us, "Susan is very approachable and flexible. Kids feel safe and happy when with Susan."

The childminder was committed and motivated to learn and improve their practice, whilst promoting positive outcomes for children. All parents strongly agreed they are confident that the childminder has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to care for my child and support their learning. The childminder is currently undertaking further formal qualification to support and develop practice. The childminder recognised the importance of maintaining their skills and knowledge in keeping children safe and protected. They had attended training in child protection, risk assessing, first aid and food hygiene. In addition to core learning, they had completed professional learning allowing them to further understand

children's needs and improve experiences for children. Evaluations of learning from training would enable the childminder to revisit and reflect on their practice and outcomes for children.

The childminder had a very good understanding of their professional responsibilities. They worked within their conditions of registration and had appropriate policies and procedures in place to support good practice. As a result, children received a very good level of care. Children benefitted from good supervision which ensured they were safe at all times.

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

To stop using antibacterial hand-wash with the children and substitute this with ordinary liquid hand-wash.

Reference:

National Care Standards, early education and childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 2: A safe environment and Standard 3: Health and wellbeing.

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2017.

Action taken since then

Childminder is no longer using antibacterial handwash.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To update the complaints policy with the correct details and include the regulatory body - the Care Inspectorate.

Reference:

National care standards, early education and childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 14: well-managed service.

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2017.

Action taken since then

This information has been added.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	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

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