

Miller, Katharine Child Minding

Biggar

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 October 2025

Service provided by:
Katharine Miller

Service provider number:
SP2003908810

Service no:
CS2003014343

About the service

Katharine Miller provides a childminding service from their family home in the rural Scottish Borders village of Skirling. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children 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 are inclusive of children of the childminder's family/household.

Children have access to the living room, play room, conservatory, toilet and supervised access to the kitchen. The children also have access to a large extensive garden space.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 22 October 2025 between 9:30 and 12:45. 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.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service
- considered feedback from six families through an online questionnaire
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- The childminder attended a wide range of training, helping them build upon their skills and knowledge.
- Children had fun and engaged confidently in a well-resourced and stimulating environment.
- The engaging range and quality of outdoor experiences enabled children to flourish in their play, learning and development.
- The childminder demonstrated skilled and responsive interactions that effectively supported children's play.
- Supportive transitions in the service helped to build strong relationships and ensure children and families felt safe and connected within the service.
- Personal plans were in place for all children and developed in partnership with families.
- Children's families were welcomed into the childminders home and this supported developing relationships, involvement and belonging in the service.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The childminder clearly communicated their vision, values, and aims through the welcome pack. During transition visits, the childminder engaged families in value-based discussions, fostering a shared understanding with families. Their values focused on delivering positive outcomes for children and families by providing a safe, comfortable, and caring environment that supported age-appropriate learning and development. These values were reflected in daily practice and underpinned a nurturing, safe, and stimulating environment.

Regular informal processes of self-evaluation of the service were in place, identifying both strengths and areas to improve. The childminder regularly reflected on their practice, using informal methods such as conversations with families, feedback during settling-in periods, and monthly questions on invoices. Families felt actively involved and consistently expressed high satisfaction with the care provided. To strengthen this process, we recommended using the 'Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: Childminding', to support more structured reflection and this would support the childminder to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The childminder had identified areas for improvement, including enhancing service documentation and expanding art and craft activities. Formalising improvement plans would help track progress, measure impact, and support ongoing quality improvement.

The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of potential risks and had a range of environmental risk assessments in place. Children benefited from a safe and well-considered setting. While daily risk assessments were carried out, we advised the childminder to update written records to include the approaches they were taking to reduce risks in relation to pets and community outings. This would strengthen their strong approach to managing risks and ensure the safety of children.

A variety of training opportunities had been completed. One family told us, "The Childminder attends regular courses to supplement her already vast knowledge of childcare". Training completed included, transitions, working with ADHD and the Autism spectrum and reading best practice guidance such as 'setting the table guidance'. The childminder was aware their child protection, food hygiene and first aid needed updating and had a plan in place to refresh this training. This helped to build upon the childminder's skills and knowledge in caring for children and keeping them safe.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

Children engaged confidently in a well-resourced and stimulating environment that supported their play,

learning and development. A wide range of experiences promoted choice, creativity, wellbeing and imagination these included construction activities, light exploration using disco balls and natural sunlight, dressing up, small world play and imaginative role play. Children demonstrated ownership of their environment by independently showing us the toy room. Children had fun exploring and were engaging enthusiastically in role play with dolls and a role play kitchen. The provision of varied spaces and accessible resources enabled children to lead their own learning through high-quality, engaging play experiences.

Children benefited from daily outdoor play across a variety of environments including local parks and the childminder's garden, which supported their health, wellbeing and development. Children explored nature, engaged in physical play, and participated in meaningful learning experiences such as harvesting vegetables and collecting eggs from chickens. These activities promoted children's understanding of the world and supported early numeracy skills. Families spoke positively about the childminder's commitment to outdoor learning and told us, "They teach the kids about the plants, the bugs, the animals, the trees. They help them to harvest the vegetables and plant things". The outdoor provision included woodlands with dens, a vegetable patch, climbing equipment, ride-on toys, and grassy hill areas, all of which encouraged physical development, imaginative play and child-led exploration. The vast and engaging range of quality outdoor experiences enabled children to flourish in their play, learning and development.

Children's play and learning was enriched through strong community connections. The childminder facilitated regular engagement with the local toddler group and visits to the park, supporting children's social development and sense of belonging within their rural community.

The childminder demonstrated skilled and responsive interactions that effectively supported children's play, learning and development. Through thoughtful questioning and discussion, the childminder extended children's experiences for example, linking songs and descriptive language to a story, which enhanced communication, language and enjoyment. There was a well-judged balance between child-led exploration and adult support. The childminder sensitively observed children's verbal and non-verbal cues to determine when to engage and when to step back, promoting independence and challenge. The caring and responsive interactions supported children's communication, movement and social development through effective modelling and engagement.

Children's play and learning were supported through a responsive and child-centred planning approach. The childminder actively listened to children's ideas and interests, empowering them to shape their own experiences and promoting their rights. Daily updates, including photographs and narratives, were shared with families to celebrate children's achievements and keep them informed. This strengthened partnerships with families, encouraged feedback, and supported continuity in learning by enabling parents to build on their child's experiences at home.

Children are supported to achieve **5 - Very Good**

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

The childminder demonstrated warm and nurturing relationships with the children, who were settled and comfortable in their care. Care and learning routines were delivered with kindness and compassion. The childminder responded sensitively to the children's cues, interests and preferences throughout our visit, supporting their emotional well-being and overall development.

The childminder provided nurturing and responsive support during transitions, recognising their importance and tailoring approaches to meet individual needs. Daily transitions were relaxed and welcoming, with families invited to stay and settle their child, fostering a sense of security and trust. Families appreciated the personal approach, sharing that "The childminder always has an ear to listen to me with a personal touch". For younger children, gradual transitions were supported through informal visits and play sessions from around eight months old, helping to build strong relationships and ensuring children and families felt safe and connected within the service.

Children's wellbeing was supported through opportunities for rest and sleep in a calm, homely environment. A travel cot was provided in a quiet downstairs bedroom, creating a peaceful space for younger children. The childminder used a monitor and carried out regular checks to ensure children's safety and comfort. Older children were able to relax on sofas in the living room. These arrangements promoted a nurturing atmosphere and met children's individual needs for rest and relaxation.

Children were kept safe through the childminder's strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities. A child protection policy was in place, and the childminder planned to refresh training in child protection and first aid. Although no medication was currently required, previous records of administration were shared. We advised referring to the Care Inspectorate's guidance 'Management of Medication in Daycare of Children and Childminding Services' to ensure records meet current standards. Updating these records in line with best practice would enhance the robustness of their procedures and support safe, nurturing care.

Mealtimes were calm and responsive to children's individual needs. Children ate comfortably at the kitchen table with the childminder nearby to support safe eating. Families provided lunches, while the childminder offered healthy snacks that children enjoyed. One parent shared, "My children love the childminder's soups and the selection of fruit and snacks offered. They have introduced them to foods they hadn't tried before and there is always plenty of variety". Water was readily available, supporting hydration. Children self-served snacks from a shared plate. We asked the childminder to ensure they always provide individual plates for each child during snack times. This would further support safe, nurturing care practices.

Personal plans were in place for all children and developed in partnership with families. These included essential information such as contact details, health and medical needs, and "All About Me" details for some children. The childminder shared that "All About Me" forms were primarily used for older children, who typically required fewer transition visits. To strengthen practice, formally recording "All About Me" information for all children would allow these to be reviewed with families at least every six months as per legislation, ensuring plans remain current and meaningful. Ongoing communication via WhatsApp allowed for responsive updates to children's needs. Parents confirmed this, stating, "Our children's routines have always been supported." The childminder actively used personal plan information to support daily routines, such as sleep schedules and individual interests, creating consistent and nurturing care and support. While informal reviews were taking place, we discussed the importance of formal reviews at least every six months in line with legislation. The childminder had already begun implementing this process by the time of our feedback visit.

Children's families were welcomed into the childminders home and this supported developing relationships, involvement and belonging in the service. One family told us, "The childminder's home is like visiting a family members. It's always welcoming, and they are happy to chat over any concerns we have about our child's development. They will often offer us a drink and the chance to join the play of the children". The childminder had demonstrated a deep understanding of the children and their families, fostering a warm, inclusive and supportive environment. Attachments had formed between the childminder and children

attending, enabling a feeling of comfort, security and belonging which positively impacted the quality of children's experiences.

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

We recommend that the childminder should begin to document how she will support the children to reach their next stage of development. This will help to ensure that an appropriate personal plan is in place and remains up to date.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing Standard 6 - Support and Development.

This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2016.

Action taken since then

We found personal plans were in place and the childminder was using informal ways such as what's app to communicate and document developments children were making and the support they were giving children to reach the next stage of development. However, reviews of plans were informal on WhatsApp, and we asked the childminder to formalise these to ensure personal plans remain up to date and reviewed regularly with families. This was actioned immediately.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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