

Farmer, Heather Child Minding

Kirkcaldy

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 January 2026

Service provided by:
Heather Farmer

Service provider number:
SP2011982636

Service no:
CS2011298867

About the service

Heather Farmer provides a childminding service from their home in Thornton, Fife. The service is registered to care for a maximum of six children under the age of 16 years, of whom a maximum of six will be under 12, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Children have access to a playroom, living room, kitchen, a toilet and a large enclosed garden. The service is within easy reach of local facilities including shops, parks and schools.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 21 January 2026 between 10:15 - 13:00. We gave feedback by telephone on Friday 23 January 2026. 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:

spoke with three children using the service

received feedback from three families

spoke with the childminder

observed practice and daily life

assessed core assurances, including the physical environment

reviewed documents.

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

Children benefitted from a childminder who was nurturing, patient, kind and responsive to their needs.

Children were having lots of fun; they were leading their own play and learning.

The childminder knew the children's individual personalities and understood their needs very well.

Children benefited from a wide range of well-chosen resources that supported their interests and stage of development.

Children were encouraged to be independent, and their wishes and choices were valued.

Children's emotional well-being benefited from strong and very positive attachments with their childminder.

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	4 - 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 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

The childminder provided high quality care for children. Their calm and caring manner helped families feel at ease and supported good communication. As a result, children and their families felt valued and well cared for. One family who responded to our MS forms questionnaires told us that, "Heather absolutely provides a home away from home for my child. I value the fact that I can go to work with no concerns whatsoever. I know my child is loved, nurtured and cared for just as much as if they were at home. This reassurance and confidence is immeasurable".

Communication with families was a strength of the service. This supported the childminder to provide a service that met the needs and interests of children in their care. The childminder regularly shared photographs and details of children's experiences using messages. This approach helped families to feel included in their child's day.

The childminder used self evaluation to reflect on their practice and identify areas for improvement. They had a clear improvement plan in place and regularly sought feedback from children and families. This feedback was used to shape the service and support ongoing improvement.

The childminder had developed relevant policies that supported the running of the service. These were shared with families so that they knew what to expect from the service. We suggested they were kept under regular review to ensure they reflected best practice.

Personal plans were in place, and these were reviewed regularly with families. This approach supported good partnership working. We discussed ways to further strengthen personal plans. For example, plans could be made more detailed and older children could be more involved in reviewing their own plans. This would further support children to feel valued, respected and listened to.

Children benefited from a secure and well managed environment where their safety was a priority. Safety arrangements were in place and helped children to feel safe and secure while in the childminder's care. Daily visual checks were carried out to ensure the home environment was safe and suitable, supporting children's wellbeing throughout the day. To build on this positive practice, safety arrangements could be strengthened further by clearly identifying key risks within the home and local community. This would support a more responsive approach to keeping children safe.

Children play and learn 5 – Very Good**Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing**

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.

The childminder provided strong support for children's play and learning. They responded sensitively to children's ideas, interests, and stages of development. A wide range of age appropriate resources encouraged children to explore, investigate, and follow their own interests. For example, children were using a variety of resources outside to engage in imaginary play situations.

Warm, nurturing interactions enhanced children's learning throughout daily routines and play. The childminders carefully considered interactions added value to play and encouraged children to, problem solve and extend their thinking. For younger children, they paid close attention to non verbal communication such as gestures, sounds, and facial expressions. This responsive approach helped children feel understood and supported in expressing their needs and interests.

Children benefited from a broad selection of materials and activities that promoted choice and independence. They were able to select what they wanted to play with and lead their own learning. Younger children also had opportunities to engage with natural and real life objects, which supported their curiosity, early language, problem solving, and sensory development. A variety of open ended resources such as mark making tools, art materials, construction toys, and books helped children build early literacy, numeracy, and creative skills through meaningful play experiences.

Children's experiences were planned around their individual interests and needs. The childminder paid close attention to children's play to understand their progress and plan activities that supported their next steps. Families were kept well informed about their child's achievements through shared photographs and regular conversations about their development. This helped families stay involved and engaged in their child's learning. Families strongly agreed that they are involved in their child's care. Comments included:

"Heather is fully immersed in the different development stages of my child. I am confident in sharing what I do at home and knowing this will be replicated when my child is in Heathers care. If I have any issues with my child's development/behaviour I share this with Heather knowing that this will continue to be worked on whilst in her care. Similarly, if my child is developing well in a particular area, I'm confident that Heather will continue to promote/encourage this whilst they are in her care".

"Heather provides a range of fun experiences from helping to plant seeds, learning how to brush teeth properly etc. Heather quickly identifies areas of interest for my child and will create new ways to explore this interest with my child".

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Children were at the heart of the service and enjoyed warm, trusting relationships with the childminder. Interactions were calm, nurturing, and reassuring, helping children feel safe, valued and cared for. The childminder understood each child's routines and preferences well and responded sensitively to both verbal and non verbal cues, such as changes in facial expression or body language. They offered comfort, joined in play, and supported early communication, helping children feel secure and confident as they explored.

Personal plans were in place for all children and had been developed with families to reflect their individual needs and routines. This key information supported the childminder to provide consistent, nurturing care tailored to each child. Plans should now be formally reviewed with families on a regular basis to ensure they remain current and continue to support children's ongoing wellbeing.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable. Children sat together at the dining table, chatting comfortably and enjoying the shared routine. This supported strong relationships and promoted communication and language development. The childminder, alongside families, provided healthy snacks that met individual dietary needs and family preferences, helping to support children's overall wellbeing.

The childminder demonstrated a strong understanding of safe sleep practices and ensured children rested safely and comfortably. They followed each child's routine and worked closely with families to agree sleep arrangements that met children's individual needs.

Children were also kept safe through very effective infection prevention and control practices. High standards of cleanliness, good hygiene routines, and consistent implementation of procedures helped reduce the risk of illness. In addition, the childminder had a very good understanding of safeguarding and child protection. They were confident in recognising potential concerns and taking the correct action, ensuring children's safety and wellbeing were always prioritised.

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	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - 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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