

Gemma Fitzpatrick Childminding Services

Child Minding

Bathgate

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2026

Service provided by:
Gemma Fitzpatrick

Service provider number:
SP2017989496

Service no:
CS2017361817

About the service

Gemma Fitzpatrick Childminding Services is registered to provide care for a maximum of six children up to the age of 16 years of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family household.

The service operates from the childminder's family home in a quiet area in Armadale, West Lothian. Children have access to a living room, kitchen, dedicated playroom and conservatory, and a downstairs toilet. The kitchen leads into an enclosed garden at the rear of the property. The service is close to local amenities, natural walks, woodlands and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 January 2026 between 10:00 and 13:00. Feedback was given to the childminder on 30 January between 9:00 and 9:45. 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:

- spent time with three children in the service
- spoke with the childminder
- received five completed questionnaires from parents
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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

- The childminder led with integrity, openness and accountability, creating a culture where children and their families felt respected, involved and able to influence the service.
- A well-structured improvement plan, rooted in participation, equity and inclusion, demonstrated strong capacity for sustained development and delivered measurable benefits for children.
- Children flourished in an inspiring, well-designed environment where literacy, numeracy and hands-on problem solving opportunities were naturally embedded in play.
- Children achieved outstanding outcomes in confidence, communication and self-regulation, supported by rich open-ended resources that promoted creativity, independence and deep exploration.
- Personal plans were of an exceptional standard and used expertly to create dynamic, rights-based support that evolved with each child's needs, strengths and interests.
- Partnership with families was a key-strength, which resulted in highly effective communication, ensuring consistently meaningful and impactful support for each child.

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	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent

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.

The childminder demonstrated a strong ethos of accountability, transparency and professional integrity across all aspects of their practice. This created a highly trusting and secure foundation for collaborative partnership with children and their families. All parents strongly agreed that they felt involved in the development of the service. The childminder's openness and reflective approach ensured that families felt valued and empowered to contribute meaningfully to ongoing developments. As a result, children and families were thoroughly and consistently involved in self-evaluation processes, with their voices directly shaping continuous improvement. This demonstrated the childminder's deep commitment to genuine partnership. One parent echoed: "[childminder's name] involves us by asking for or discussing with us ways that we can help develop the service. [childminder's name] is always thinking of ways to develop/improve things and shares these with [our child] and us as parents".

Self-evaluation was systematic and well-structured. It was firmly underpinned by the new Self-evaluation Quality Framework, which the childminder used confidently to reflect on practice. A wide, well-balanced range of evidence, such as observations, family feedback, children's views, professional guidance and reflective tools, was used to identify clear strengths and priorities for development. This analytical and robust approach ensured that changes were purposeful, coherent and aimed at improving children's wellbeing, engagement and learning.

The childminder demonstrated a strong capacity for continued improvement. Their proactive, research-informed and child-centred practice ensured improvements were not standalone actions but formed part of a sustained and dynamic cycle of development, demonstrating a highly reflective and forward-looking approach.

The improvement plan was strong and clearly aligned with the needs of children and their families, with a firm emphasis on participation, equity and inclusion. Priorities were both realistic and ambitious, showing a confident understanding of how to sustain and advance the service over time. Families were well informed about planned developments and understood how these would benefit their children. The positive impact of the service's improvement journey was evident, with changes leading to measurable and lasting gains in children's wellbeing, engagement and learning. This provided clear assurance that high standards would not only be maintained but further strengthened.

Engagement with sector developments was consistently robust. The childminder demonstrated a proactive approach to professional learning by regularly accessing the Care Inspectorate Hub and participating in relevant training opportunities through the SCMA (Scottish Childminding Association), including sessions focused on the Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare. This sustained commitment to ongoing development ensured that the service remained closely aligned with current best practice and emerging guidance.

Collaboration with other local childminders was also a notable strength. The childminder contributed actively to professional discussions, sharing ideas and effective approaches that supported collective improvement.

We discussed with the childminder further opportunities to share their effective practice across the wider childminding community and beyond. By disseminating their approach to quality assurance, reflective practice and implementing meaningful change, they could contribute to influencing positive change more broadly, ensuring children's voices and play rights continue to shape high-quality practice across the sector.

Children play and learn 6 – Excellent

Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

The childminder demonstrated excellent practice in supporting children's play with a strong emphasis on enabling children to develop the skills, confidence and curiosity essential for lifelong learning. The learning environment was intentionally designed to reflect each child's needs, interests and emerging abilities, ensuring experiences were consistently meaningful and developmentally appropriate. Opportunities for early literacy and numeracy were woven naturally into play. Children encountered numbers, patterns, mark making and language development through relevant and enjoyable experiences. This ensured progression was embedded in contexts that made sense to children. As a result, children were highly motivated and absorbed in their play, showing sustained excitement, perseverance and delight as they explored.

Children consistently led their own learning, made choices and followed their ideas. This ensured that learning felt empowering and joyful, allowing children to set the pace of their exploration in a way that respected their individuality. They confidently set the rhythm of play, showing the childminder what they were curious about, ready for, or proud of. This was particularly evident when children investigated how things work and used everyday loose items, such as boxes, tubes and pieces of fabric, creatively to build, experiment and problem-solve.

The indoor environment was thoughtfully organised and visually inviting. Children enjoyed engaging with a broad selection of open-ended materials such as sensory trays, treasure baskets, and natural elements. This promoted independence, creativity and sustained engagement. Resources were accessible at child height and presented in a way that stimulated curiosity and exploration. Outdoor learning mirrored the same high standards. Children had opportunities to experiment, create, take appropriate risks and engage in imaginative and physically active play. They were eager to show the inspector the well-resourced outdoor space, including a mud kitchen, climbing frame, sand pit, construction area and themed play zones. This ensured children benefitted from a coherent learning experience across all environments.

The childminder demonstrated a deep understanding of how children learn, recognising the importance of matching support to each child's pace and stage of development. They observed children closely and adapted interactions sensitively, offering encouragement while promoting independence. As a result, children built self-regulation, confidence, empathy and early social skills through active engagement.

Children were developing rich language as the childminder modelled vocabulary and extended their ideas. Children responded positively to purposeful praise that celebrated their achievements and strengthened their sense of self. They chose songs and nursery rhymes throughout the day, repeating favourite lines, adding actions and music to express their feelings. These moments supported their emotional security and early language development, helping them to feel grounded and joyful. They moved freely between one-to-one moments and small group play, inviting friends to join them and practising turn-taking, with gentle support when needed. Their choices shaped the rhythm of the day, with the childminder following their lead to ensure rich opportunities for cooperation and meaningful interaction. This contributed to creating a contagiously fun atmosphere with lots of smiles, giggles and a genuine sense of connection.

Planning and assessment processes were firmly child-centred. Skilled observation enabled the childminder to identify patterns of play, developmental progress and emerging interests. This informed flexible planning that balanced children's ideas with meaningful opportunities for progression. Strengths-based personal development plans ensured continuity and clear progression. Children demonstrated consistent development in communication, numeracy and independent problem-solving.

Children flourished within this rich, enabling and fun environment. High-quality play, strong relationships and responsive interactions ensured learning was joyful, meaningful and developmentally significant. This excellent standard of provision resulted in highly positive outcomes, with children observed to be confident, curious, independent and deeply engaged in their play and learning.

Children are supported to achieve 6 - Excellent

Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Children experienced an exceptional level of nurturing care, where their voices, cues and emotions guided the daily interactions. The childminder's consistently responsive practice created an emotionally secure environment where children felt safe to express themselves. The childminder's excellent understanding of children's cues and developmental needs promoted strong attachments and helped children regulate their emotions with increasing independence. Children showed clear joy, curiosity and eagerness in their play, often approaching the inspector with excitement to share what they were doing. Their enthusiasm and pride reflected how secure and happy they felt within the setting and how strongly their voices shaped their play experiences.

Transitions were managed with sensitivity and a high level of planning. The childminder effectively shaped and reviewed transition strategies, ensuring children benefitted from emotionally secure changes throughout the day. The use of a leaver's questionnaire demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and meaningful family engagement.

The daily routine was exceptionally well-structured to support children's wellbeing, emotional security and developmental progress. Children looked settled and confident thanks to the predictable yet flexible patterns. The 'take-home bear' and 'Proud cloud' initiatives provided meaningful ways for children to share achievements and link experiences between home and the service. Older children were seen supporting younger children in a nurturing and natural way, reflecting the strong ethos of community and connection within the setting.

Personal plans were of an exemplary standard. The childminder placed great emphasis on children's rights, individuality and sense of belonging, ensuring plans reflected their interests and evolving stages of development. The childminder used the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included) exceptionally effectively as a shared language with families to identify strengths, needs, and progress. Each plan was highly dynamic and rooted in strong partnership with children and their parents. Plans included clear, achievable strategies that were regularly reviewed and adapted. Monthly monitoring demonstrated strong reflective practice and ensured support remained aligned to each child's needs.

Children's privacy and dignity were upheld to a very high standard. The childminder balanced independence with sensitive, timely support, ensuring children felt respected and capable during personal care and routine tasks. Sensitive sleep arrangements supported children's health and wellbeing. This ensured safe, hygienic and consistent rest experiences, which fully followed best practice.

Connections with families were particularly strong. The childminder built trusting and respectful relationships. Families told us that they were invited into the home regularly to share updates, observe practice and participate in personal plan discussions. The childminder recognised and celebrated the strengths families brought and responded sensitively to their preferences and circumstances.

Parents told us they felt fully connected to their child's experiences. A combination of secure online tools, daily diaries and in-person discussions was used to share photos, updates and key information with parents. This ensured communication was consistent and accessible. Seasonal newsletters offered meaningful updates on learning, wellbeing, practice changes and achievements.

Consultation with families was a key-strength. The childminder gathered feedback through a range of approaches, including "you said, I did" updates, showing that families' suggestions shaped change. The childminder also supported parents' understanding of child development with practical, respectful guidance, including examples of how to nurture children's repeated play patterns and ways of exploring the world (schemas) at home.

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	6 - Excellent
Playing, learning and developing	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent
Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent

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