

Willows Childminding Child Minding

Alexandria

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
5 February 2026

Service provided by:
Monica Kennedy

Service provider number:
SP2012984281

Service no:
CS2012313293

About the service

Willow's Childminding operates from their family home in Balloch, West Dunbartonshire. They are registered to provide a childminding service to a maximum of six children at any one time under 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. Children have access to the living room, dining room, toilet facilities on the ground floor and designated space in the back garden. The service is close to schools and nurseries, green spaces, local amenities and can be reached by public transport links.

About the inspection

This was a short announced inspection which took place on 4 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 children using the service
- gathered feedback from six families through online questionnaires
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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 provided a calm, nurturing environment and built strong relationships that supported children's wellbeing and security.
- The childminder engaged positively in the inspection, welcomed guidance and showed clear commitment to improvement.
- The childminder reflected on their practice and identified actions to strengthen self evaluation and quality assurance.
- The childminder offered good quality play experiences, used local resources well, and supported children's social development and enjoyment in learning.

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	4 - 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

Leadership and management of staff and resources

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

During the inspection, the childminder engaged positively and welcomed advice and support. This demonstrated their commitment to improvement and their capacity for change. Their approach showed a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and families.

The childminder intends to update their aims and objectives into a clearer vision, values and aims. We discussed involving the views of families and children where possible. The childminder explained that the vision, values and aims would continue to focus on building and sustaining positive relationships with children and families, providing a safe and stimulating environment, and ensuring children experienced a range of engaging activities both indoors and outdoors. Revisiting and refreshing the vision, values and aims will support the childminder to reflect clearly on their practice and promote ongoing improvement.

The childminder had previously completed self-evaluation paperwork with a focus on strengths and areas for development. We suggested that the childminder re-engaged with more formal self-evaluation using 'A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sectors: Childminding.' This approach will support the childminder to identify strengths and areas for development more clearly. We also suggested capturing the views of families and children where possible, for example through questionnaires or opportunities to gather their views on future developments. This will support meaningful self-evaluation and improve outcomes for children.

Quality assurance processes included policies, procedures, and risk assessments. The current system followed a checklist format. Moving forward, we suggested that the childminder developed these further and organised them in a more strategic way. Risk assessments would benefit from greater detail and clearer identification of potential risks and the control measures in place. For example, the childminder could identify risks associated with water at the local park and clearly outline the steps taken to protect children.

Similarly, the childminder's policies and procedures required updating to reflect current legislation and to clearly outline the childminder's roles and responsibilities. We would encourage the childminder to explore access to policies and procedures through the local authority to support partnership working. Where this is not available, we suggest using reputable childminding websites that provided templates for risk assessments and policy formats. This will support the childminder to strengthen quality assurance processes and ensure practice is clear, consistent and well informed. See area for improvement 1.

The childminder was registered with childcare.co.uk and made use of the training opportunities available through this platform. The childminder also accessed some local authority training on an annual basis. We suggested that the childminder continues to explore a range of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. This will support the childminder to further develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in practice.

Areas for improvement

1. To support continued best outcomes for children and families, the childminder should develop and implement robust quality assurance systems. This should include, but not be limited to:
 - Introduce regular, formal self evaluation to promote reflective practice and drive continuous improvement.
 - Update and develop policies and procedures, including Administration of Medication, Accident and Incident Procedures, and Child Protection, to ensure these reflect current best practice guidance, local authority procedures and relevant legislation.
 - Develop robust risk assessments, clearly identifying potential risks and outlining preventative measures to keep children safe from harm.

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).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Playing, learning and developing

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

Our observations showed that the childminder provided good quality play experiences within the home environment. Photographs shared on the family WhatsApp group demonstrated that the childminder made good use of local resources and environments. Children had regular contact with other local childminders and their minded children. They also had weekly access to toddler groups and designated use of halls, which allowed for both free flow play and adult initiated activities and experiences. Having access to a network of childminders promoted children's social development and provided opportunities to build friendships and develop confidence in group settings.

Observations showed that children had access to a range of toys and resources, which the childminder rotated weekly or in response to children indicating they wanted something different to play with. Older children accessed a range of activities, including arts and crafts and magnetic play. We suggested that the childminder revisited these opportunities with the older children and captured their views, for example through a simple mind map showing what they would like to play with or learn about.

The childminder knew the children well. During the inspection, children were engaged in play, either independently or alongside the childminder. The range of experiences and resources available supported children's curiosity, creativity, sensory exploration and imaginative play. During the inspection, children sat on the childminder's knee and enjoyed a story. The childminder was animated and effectively supported children's imaginative play and language development.

Inspection report

Families valued and appreciated the frequent opportunities children had to access the outdoor environment. Families told us "They are never just indoors, they are constantly out doing lots of different things, nice picnics, walks in park, transport museum etc, it's very varied." And "Always has great fun, lots of playing outside and activities. Each day is varied and the clubs the (Childminder) takes them to are great for meeting lots of other children."

Photographs viewed of visits to the local park, farm and soft play area showed that children were happy, engaged and enjoying their experiences. We suggested that the childminder uses guidance such as Realising the Ambition to further support their role in promoting high quality interactions and meaningful learning experiences.

The childminder had introduced observation and activity sheets to document some of the experiences offered to children. We suggested that these remain individualised and meaningful to each child. This will support clear evidence of each child's unique learning journey.

The childminder's use of WhatsApp supported parents' understanding of play based learning and demonstrated how learning opportunities were embedded throughout daily experiences. We suggested that the childminder captures and formally documents the views of families, as this would support the tracking of children's learning and strengthen partnership working.

Moving forward, the childminder should consider ways for children to revisit and reflect on their own play and learning. We discussed exploring how learning records could be made more accessible to children, as they may not regularly view photographs shared with families through mobile phones. This will provide children the opportunity to recognise their achievements, recall experiences, and develop a sense of ownership over their learning.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Nurturing care and support

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.

Observations showed that the childminder was kind, caring and compassionate in their interactions, which helped children feel welcomed and nurtured within the home. Children experienced warm, patient and nurturing responses, and the childminder provided comfort, praise and reassurance. This approach supported children to feel safe, secure and emotionally supported. The childminder presented as calm and gentle in their manner, which contributed to a relaxed and reassuring environment.

It was evident that the childminder had formed positive and meaningful relationships with children and their families. Families told us "The service provided is exceptional. The care & love provided is exactly what we need." And "The (Childminder) is a caring and loving person and I am very happy for my child to be under (their) care within and out with (their) home."

Children were supported to develop independence. The childminder provided a healthy lunch and ensured children had access to fresh drinking water, which aligned with best practice guidance, Setting the Table. We would encourage the childminder to continue sitting and eating with the children, as this supports safe eating practices and promotes positive interactions and socialisation.

Personal care routines, including nappy changing, were carried out sensitively and in a manner that supported children's comfort and wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place and supported children's wellbeing. The childminder gathered relevant information and used a range of strategies to meet individual care needs. To strengthen this further, we suggested that the childminder included specific strategies to support children during times of distress or dysregulation.

Alongside the observation sheets already in place, we suggested that the childminder continued to set and share targets with families. This supports clearer identification of what children are currently working towards and enables the childminder to track progress and assessment information effectively.

Feedback from families showed that the childminder had positive and respectful relationships with children's families. We observed that the childminder shared key messages about children's experiences through regular use of WhatsApp, which supported effective communication and meaningful information sharing. Families told us "The (Childminder) always communicates well on how my child got on that day, always provides extra information on different groups and classes available to us." And "The provision we have had over the years has been fantastic. We couldn't do without it."

Day-to-day drop-off and pickup times further supported an open-door approach, and parents were encouraged to engage with the childminder in informal ways. This approach supported positive relationships, promoted trust, and ensured families felt valued as partners in their child's care and learning.

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

The childminder to continue with plans to make sure each child's plan includes all updated information and is reviewed six monthly or sooner when needed. This will result in clear and detailed information being in place for each child in order for the childminder to support individual needs and promote positive outcomes. This will also help to make sure parents are fully included in identifying their child's ongoing needs and help them keep track of how their child is developing in the service.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15), and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 28 August 2018.

Action taken since then

Personal plans are now in place for all children, containing enrolment details and personal care plan information such as dietary information and likes/dislikes. Plans are reviewed on a six-monthly basis by the childminder, and verbally shared with families. We have revisited procedures to ensure parents are asked to sign and formally contribute to the review process.

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	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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