

Armstrong, Emily Child Minding

Banff

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 January 2026

Service provided by:
Emily Armstrong

Service provider number:
SP2010979916

Service no:
CS2010272981

About the service

Emily Armstrong provides a childminding service from their home in a residential area of Whitehills. They are registered to provide care to a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of children in the childminder's family. At the time of inspection there were three children present.

The service is close to local primary schools, shops, parks and other amenities. Children are cared for primarily in the outdoors, including the childminder's garden. The bathroom in the house is used for changing and toileting. Local areas, including beaches and woodland, are used daily to extend children's experiences.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 January 2026 between 09:50 and 13:00 and 20 January between 10:00 and 12:45. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with children using the service
- received five completed questionnaires from parents/carers
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children were cared for primarily in the outdoors and enjoyed daily access to a range of outdoor environments.
- Children benefitted as the childminder was committed to improving their service and keeping their training up-to-date.
- Children's wellbeing was promoted through caring and nurturing interactions with the childminder.
- Children were able to lead their own play and 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	5 - Very 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 5 – Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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 shared their vision, values and aims (VVA) with families at registration, helping parents understand the service's approach and feel informed from the outset. Although the VVA reflected current practice, it had not been reviewed recently. Regular review, with input from families, would help ensure it continues to represent the childminder's and parents' aspirations for children.

Effective communication supported strong, trusting relationships with families, and parents told us they had a positive relationship with the childminder. One parent commented, "Emily always takes time to engage in conversation at pick up and drop offs. She keeps me up-to-date and informed regarding [my child]". Another parent commented, "Emily often asks for input in her setting. All suggestions are always considered". The childminder recognised the importance of high-quality interactions and engagement with children and families. Regular opportunities for conversation and information sharing promoted continuity of care. Parents' involvement in events, such as outings and seasonal activities, strengthened inclusion and created further opportunities for them to contribute ideas and feedback about the service.

Purposeful self-evaluation supported the childminder to provide care tailored to the needs and preferences of children and families. Feedback was gathered through informal discussions, annual parent surveys and regular activities to capture children's views. This resulted in meaningful improvements, such as changes to how observations were recorded, making information easier for parents to access.

Quality assurance processes were embedded in practice. These included regular reflection on children's engagement in activities and consideration of timing of events to enable parents to participate meaningfully. The childminder had carried out professional reading to support them in evaluating the outdoor service they offered.

The childminder used national guidance, such as the 'Quality Improvement Framework', 'Realising the Ambition' and the 'United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC)' to inform self-evaluation and plan improvements. They had attended various online training courses and spoke about the impact of these. This ensured their practice was aligned with current guidance and legislation.

Children benefitted from the childminder's links with other local childminders and groups. This extended their social experiences and provided the childminder with opportunities to share ideas and discuss practice.

Children play and learn 4 – Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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 had a good understanding of children's stages of development and learning. Their

appropriate expectations of children's abilities and behaviour supported positive, meaningful experiences. As a result, children were confident in their play and engaged well in a range of experiences.

Children enjoyed a wide range of engaging, child led play opportunities that supported their imagination and learning. During the inspection, children explored where animals live, practised safe play in the woods and identified numbers in their environment. Books and digital technology helped them research their interests. Parents told us they valued the variety of outdoor and creative experiences, noting that activities were tailored to children's abilities and interests.

One parent commented, "Every day they are out and about somewhere and have unstructured play on the beach/in the woods. They do all sorts of craft activities and lots of freedom to choose how they play. Emily's approach seems to be very child led which is why we love it". Another commented, "Emily offers all types of activity such as beach, wood trips etc they are also off exploring and the activities are always educational based and on [my child's] abilities, so they always feel involved and included. [My child] also picked up some German which they tell me about at home".

The childminder shared information about children's experiences and learning through digital newsletters, face to face discussions and a digital app. This supported families to celebrate achievements and build links with learning at home. We discussed how communication could be strengthened further by more clearly identifying the learning taking place during activities.

Children's confidence and wellbeing were supported through warm, nurturing interactions. They approached the childminder readily for support and to involve them in their play. Interactions encouraged children to think, wonder and problem solve. Responsive conversations supported language development, while natural use of number and measurement during play promoted early numeracy skills. Imaginative play was child led and used to provide opportunities for children to develop their thinking and problem solving. Regular use of stories and singing further supported children's literacy and language.

The childminder observed children's interests and achievements and used this information to plan further activities. However, observations were not yet consistently recorded or shared. This created the potential for some achievements to be overlooked and for planning not to fully support children's progression. While parents were happy with communication overall, one expressed a preference for more information about children's learning. The digital app for sharing observations was recently introduced. The childminder planned to use it more effectively to support consistent recording and sharing of children's achievements and 'next steps' in learning.

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.

The childminder had formed warm, nurturing relationships with the children and knew them well. As a result, children experienced consistent, responsive care that supported their sense of security and helped them express their needs confidently.

Children were well supported during transitions, both within the daily routine and when settling into or moving on from the service. The childminder's planning and sensitive approach helped children manage

change confidently and promoted their emotional wellbeing.

Children's privacy and dignity were promoted. The childminder gave lots of opportunity for independence but was also aware of when to offer support. The childminder was considerate of the different support needs of individual children and tailored their interactions to meet these. Children were able to choose to play individually or in a small group, giving them opportunities to regulate emotions and socialise.

Opportunities to meet other childminders and visit local groups extended children's social experiences and contributed to their confidence. Children were kind and caring towards one another, and the childminder acknowledged and praised this, reinforcing positive relationships.

The childminder used current guidance, such as 'Setting the Table', to provide snacks that promoted children's health. Snack time was relaxed and social, offering a meaningful opportunity for connection. Water was accessible throughout the day, supporting children to stay hydrated during play and outings.

The childminder knew the children well and gathered information from families to understand their individual needs. Children's rights were promoted through the use of United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles within personal plans and policies. Personal plans were reviewed with families, supporting continuity of care. While the childminder used effective strategies to support children's wellbeing, these were not always recorded in personal plans. Including this information will strengthen consistency and support ongoing evaluation.

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	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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