

MacDonald, Sharon Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2026

Service provided by:
Sharon MacDonald

Service provider number:
SP2008969301

Service no:
CS2008173180

About the service

Sharon MacDonald operates a childminding service from their family home in Camelon, Falkirk. They are registered to provide care to a maximum of eight children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom, no more than 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. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminders family.

Children have access to the living room, kitchen and ground floor toilet facilities. There is a garden to the side of the house that children can use, weather permitting. The service is close to schools and nurseries, green spaces, local attractions and can be reached by public transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 January 2026 between 11:15 and 13:00. 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:

- spoke to four children using the service and observed play
- received three completed questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children were settled, happy and having fun as they explored.
- There was a range of age appropriate resources to support play.
- Children benefitted from regular visits to attractions in their local community.
- Positive attachments had been formed that supported children to feel safe and secure.
- The childminder should complete relevant training to support children's safety and wellbeing.
- The childminder should engage with best practice guidance to promote a culture of self-evaluation for improvement.
- Establishing an effective quality assurance system would support the childminder to carry out tasks in a more planned approach.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 3 – Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The childminder had a vision for the service that focused on offering a safe and friendly environment that supported play, learning and building children's self esteem. This reflected their wishes for children to feel safe, secure, and have fun in the setting. The service values and aims had not been reviewed for some time. We encouraged the childminder to review these with children and families to ensure they reflect current practice. For example, align with children's rights, needs, and wishes(see area for improvement 1.)

Self evaluation processes were informal. The childminder recognised several areas for improvement were needed following a significant period of change. They were not yet familiar with current guidance to support self-evaluation. We signposted them to the Care Inspectorate 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: childminding.' Using best practice guidance could support the childminder to identify what is working well and areas for improvement. Gathering the views of children and families should be part of this process. (see area for improvement 2.) Following the visit, the childminder had issued questionnaires to children and families, demonstrating they had begun to engage in self-evaluation for improved change.

Quality assurance systems need improved to ensure they are effective and consistent at supporting the childminder to deliver quality care for children. For example, completing relevant training, carrying out reviews of risk assessments and policies and procedures. This would ensure the service is complying with best practice guidance. Some documentation referred to the service as 'Treehouse'. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate portal to update service information (see area for improvement 3.)

The childminder had records relating to children and families who use the service, share information and observations of play using online platforms. To ensure personal information is securely stored in line with guidance, the childminder should register their service with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). (see area for improvement 4.)

Areas for improvement

1. The childminder should review the vision, values and aims of the service. This is to ensure they reflect how children's rights, needs, and wishes will be promoted, using best practice guidance. This review should involve children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

2. To promote a culture of improvement and reflection, the childminder should engage with best practice guidance such as 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors:

childminding. This should include regularly gathering the views of children and families to evaluate what is going well and identify any areas for improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

3. The childminder should develop and implement an effective system of quality assurance that takes account of tasks that need to be carried out. This should include, but not limited to completing relevant training, reviewing safety measures and policies and procedures.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (4.19)

4. To ensure children and families details are safely stored and shared in line with guidance, the childminder should register with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO.)

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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.

Playing, learning and developing

Children were settled, relaxed, and confident as they explored the range of resources available at their level. They were able to choose from a selection of age appropriate toys that included role play, cause and effect toys, books, small world figures and wheeled resources. Children indicated to the childminder their favourite toy and they responded to support them to access this. We encouraged the childminder to develop more natural resources that would support younger children to explore and investigate using their senses.

Families told us they were 'always' welcomed in to the childminder home to discuss their child's care, play and learning. Comments included "I can visit her house to discuss details whenever I require", "Sharon's door is always open!", "when collecting I go in and see [them] play and see that [they] are happy" and "She introduced my children to horses and they love the activities". This meant families were confident their child was having a positive experience.

Interactions were warm, nurturing, and responsive to children's individual needs and wishes. It was evident the childminder clearly knew children very well. They had formed positive attachments, helping them feel safe and emotionally secure. For example, one child was settling in the service. The childminder recognised they needed the security and reassurance of being close to them, whilst others were more confident to explore and play. This supported a smooth transition from home to the setting. Families 'strongly agreed' they had a good relationship with the childminder. They told us "She is friendly and approachable. She has always been flexible and accommodating to our needs, which we really appreciate" and "She's easy going, keeps me up to date with how [my child] has been, what [they] learned and is motherly to [them] when need be". As a result, families had developed positive, trusting relationships with the childminder.

Planning for children's experiences were informal and centred around their interests, trips, and individual routines. They had opportunities to spend time in green spaces, visit local amenities, and take part in community activities, all of which contributed to their play and learning. They told us they enjoyed visits to the park and splashing in water. Time was spent with the childminders horses, learning how to feed and care for them. The importance of outdoor experiences and the positive impact these had on children's wellbeing was recognised. Families received updates through online platforms, sharing the fun experiences children enjoyed.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

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.

Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, kind and compassionate care. The childminder was attuned to children's individual needs, offering comfort, reassurance and close contact when needed. This sensitive approach supported secure attachments and helped children feel safe, particularly children who were adjusting to time away from their families. This supported a smooth transition. Families commented "I can totally rely on her with my children" and "My [child] loves Sharon and is always happy to see her when we drop [them] off. She is warm and clearly cares very deeply for the children she looks after. She is compassionate and experienced". Families had confidence and trust in the childminder to meet children's needs.

Daily routines were positive and promoted children's wellbeing. The childminder recognised children's cues. For example, when they were ready to eat and nap, responding promptly. Children were supported to remain hydrated throughout the day using their own individual drinking bottles. Families provided packed lunches and the childminder supported with food preparation at times. We encouraged them to register as a food business as this is required when preparing foods. Mealtimes were relaxed and children enjoyed being together at the low level table. Seating at the table needs to be improved to ensure children have appropriate and safe seats where they can enjoy foods with their peers (see area for improvement 1.)

Personal plans were in place. The childminder recognised these had not been updated for some time. Following our visit, they had begun the process of updating the format. We signposted them to the Care Inspectorate 'guidance for providers on personal planning. Early learning and childcare' to strengthen practice. Plans should be updated at least every six months, or sooner if there are changes to a child's needs. We encouraged the childminder to develop a system in their quality assurance to review plans with children and families. This would ensure plans remain relevant and effectively support children's care, learning and development.

The childminder's welcoming and approachable manner helped families feel valued and supported, contributing positively to children's sense of security. Daily conversations at drop off and pickups provided opportunities to share information about children's routines, experiences and achievements. The childminder also used online platforms to share updates, which helped families feel informed and involved. Families told us "She tells me about all the activities my [child] does when [they] are with her", "Sharon keeps us informed about how our [child] is getting on, [their] activities and interests, and is always open to conversation about how we want [them] cared for" and we are "Kept well up to date with everything going on". As a result, positive, partnership working had been established that supported positive outcomes for children.

The childminder previously shared newsletters with families. This had not happened for a period of time but they were keen to look at ways to share information throughout the year to ensure families remain fully aware of changes, events and developments within the service. Families were asked if there was anything that would make going to the childminders better. They said "She is already doing her best", "To be honest nothing at all" and "more outdoor trips".

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children can enjoy a safe and sociable mealtime experience that promotes safe practice. The childminder should register as a food business with the local authority and ensure all children have seating that is appropriate for their age and stage of development.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: ' I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.(HSCS 5.23)

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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