

The Wee Adventurers Child Minding

Thurso

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 January 2026

Service provided by:
Samantha McMillan

Service provider number:
SP2023000227

Service no:
CS2023000345

About the service

The Wee Adventurers is a childminding service provided in a residential home in Thurso, Caithness. The Wee Adventurers is registered to provide a childminding service to a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's own children.

The service is close to a local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for downstairs and use the kitchen and dining area, living room and bathroom. Children also have access to a garden to the rear of the property.

During the inspection, there was one minded child present, as well as the childminder's own child.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 and 13 January 2026. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was provided to the childminder via telephone on 14 January 2026.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the registration inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed online feedback from one family.

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 experienced nurturing care through highly effective and warm interactions from the childminder.
- Effective communication with families strengthened relationships and promoted continuity of care.
- Planning was responsive and well informed, supporting clear progression in children's development.
- Risk assessment procedures, particularly for nappy changing, needed strengthened to ensure consistently safe practice.
- The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities, using self evaluation and ongoing training effectively to drive purposeful improvements and maintain high standards of care 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	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	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

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.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The childminder had clear aims, objectives, vision and values. These were consistently reflected in practice. The childminder used these principles to guide decision making, ensuring a thoughtful and child centred approach to care and learning. Good knowledge of each child's needs and next steps informed the planning of meaningful, developmentally appropriate experiences. Routines were balanced with flexibility and older children were actively involved in shaping activities. As a result, practice was purposeful, values led and contributed to nurturing experiences for children.

The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities and a strong commitment to providing high standards of care and learning. Recent self evaluation and ongoing training demonstrated a proactive approach to professional development, with reflective practice used effectively to identify purposeful improvements.

Communication with families was transparent and collaborative. The childminder consulted with parents on decisions, responded to feedback and considered individual requirements. This approach built strong, trusting relationships and supported consistency between home and the service.

Current arrangements were not always fully aligned with best practice guidance for safe sleep. While the childminder showed awareness of recommended approaches, the minded child occasionally slept in a buggy, which did not fully reflect safe sleep expectations. Enhancing arrangements in this area will help ensure children sleep safely and comfortably.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 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.

Quality Indicator: Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

The home environment was clean, tidy and well maintained. It was homely and welcoming, contributing to a strong sense of comfort and belonging for the minded child. During the visit, the minded child moved freely and confidently within the living room. The childminder modelled good practice by encouraging the child to tidy resources before choosing new ones, helping maintain a calm environment and supporting responsibility.

The minded child was able to direct their own play and freely access a wide range of age appropriate and interesting resources that supported their learning. The childminder offered some open ended materials, indoors and outdoors, which captured the child's interests. Opportunities for choice were consistently provided, supporting independence and decision making.

Outdoor play was a priority within the setting, contributing positively to children's wellbeing and learning. However, outdoor play was not possible during the inspection due to the weather. The outdoor environment was secure, inviting and well resourced to support a wide range of experiences. The mud kitchen, in particular, offered rich opportunities for sensory exploration and imaginative play.

Robust risk assessments were not yet in place for nappy changing practice. This meant that some potential risks had not been fully considered or addressed. Developing clearer risk assessments will help the childminder strengthen routines and ensure children continue to experience safe, hygienic care that supports their health and wellbeing.

Children play and learn 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.

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

The minded child experienced a wide range of play and learning opportunities that were well matched to their stage of development and interests. They were able to make choices from a selection of age appropriate resources such as, role play items, construction materials and books. These opportunities supported curiosity, problem solving and imaginative play. As a result, the minded child was engaged, motivated and having fun in developmentally appropriate experiences.

Skilled and purposeful interactions from the childminder had a clear and positive impact on the minded child's language, literacy and numeracy development. The child benefitted from sensitive support that promoted confidence and early communication skills. For example, the childminder modelled and repeated new words, narrated play and responded to the child's interests in dinosaurs, vehicles and block play. This helped extend vocabulary and deepen understanding. Early mathematical concepts were also introduced naturally through play, including counting, sorting and categorising objects, which promoted early numeracy in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

The childminder actively involved older children in planning activities, helping them feel valued and promoting ownership of their learning. This contributed to an inclusive and responsive mixed age environment where all children could thrive.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of the minded child's development and next steps. Planned experiences were carefully considered and aligned with the child's stage of development, supporting meaningful progression in key areas of learning. Effective use of observation further informed planning and enabled the childminder to extend play experiences in ways that were responsive and purposeful. The child's achievements were recognised, recorded and shared with their family, strengthening partnership working and promoting continuity of care. As a result, the minded child benefitted from enjoyable and relevant learning opportunities, contributing positively to their ongoing development and wellbeing.

Children are supported to achieve 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.

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

The minded child experienced nurturing care and attention through highly effective interactions by the childminder. The home was a calm and inviting space, and the minded child was confident, comfortable and happy in the childminders care. Their needs, preferences and cues were responded to without delay. The childminder was consistently down at the child's level, supporting them in their play. This helped them to feel valued, safe and secure.

The childminder's highly effective use of personal planning had a positive impact on the minded child's wellbeing and experiences. A strong understanding of each child's individual needs enabled the provision of care that was consistently responsive and nurturing. Regular review of personal information ensured that changes in younger children's needs were identified promptly, supporting early and appropriate adaptations to care routines.

The use of varied communication methods and daily verbal updates strengthened relationships with parents and promoted continuity of care. As a result, the minded child experienced predictable, well informed support that contributed to their overall sense of security and wellbeing.

Mealtimes and snack had a relaxed, homely feel and the childminder demonstrated a strong awareness of choking prevention while still promoting children's independence. This contributed to positive, unhurried eating experiences where children felt safe, supported and confident in developing their self help skills.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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