

# Julie Dowds Childminding Service Child Minding

Kilmarnock

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
17 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Julie Dowds

**Service provider number:**  
SP2012984234

**Service no:**  
CS2012312945

## About the service

Julie Dowds trading as Julie Dowds childminding service provides a childminding service from their home in the town of Stewarton, East Ayrshire. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 6 children under the age of 16 years, of whom a maximum of 6 will be under the age of 12, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children in the childminder's own family. At the time of our inspection, 17 children were registered with the service, all on a part time basis. Three children were present during our inspection.

The service is located close to shops, schools, green spaces and other amenities. Children have access to a designated playroom, WC, lounge/dining space and a fully enclosed garden.

## About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place on 17 February 2026 between 10:00 and 12:30. 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 the three young children present
- reviewed electronic feedback from five families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the childminder
- 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

- Children and families benefitted from nurturing relationships with the childminder.
- The childminder placed children and families at the heart of the service.
- Children experienced very warm and responsive care meaning they felt safe and secure.
- The childminder had a very good understanding of how children develop and learn which was reflected in the experiences offered to children.
- Regular visits to local toddler groups and community resources enriched children's experiences.
- Self-evaluation was purposeful, enabling the childminder to deliver high-quality care and learning that was tailored to the individual needs of children and their families.

## 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	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 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: Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children and families experienced a warm, homely environment where they felt comfortable and valued. Parents told us they were always welcomed into the childminder's home, which aligned with the settings vision, values, and aims of creating a trusting and inclusive atmosphere. The childminder's nurturing and responsive interactions with children and families contributed to them feeling respected, listened to, and confident in the care provided.

The childminder had consulted children and families informally through daily verbal conversations at drop off and collection times, as well as more formally through questionnaires. This inclusive approach helped parents feel valued and ensured that their contributions were reflected in both their children's daily experiences and the wider ongoing development of the service. All families who responded to our questionnaires strongly agreed that they felt meaningfully involved in developing the setting. Comments included, "We are always asked our opinions of what we prefer and how they can improve her service," and "Our views to improve the service are always sought." To continue to strengthen the quality of feedback gathered, the childminder could now consider adapting their questionnaires to include more open-ended questions, enabling families to provide richer, more detailed views. This would support the childminder to identify clearer priorities for improvement.

A purposeful and well considered approach to self-evaluation was evident. The current processes included checklists and reflective statements, which supported the delivery of high-quality care and learning experiences tailored to the individual needs of children and families. The childminder used their self-evaluation effectively to inform their improvement planning cycle. Recent reflections had identified the need to update the service's values, vision, and aims, with a focus on further involving families more meaningfully in this process. Strengthening this aspect could enhance participation and support families to feel empowered, ensuring any changes made were meaningful and directly informed by their views and aspirations.

High quality care, play, and learning were central to the childminder's practice. They made effective use of best-practice guidance and ongoing professional learning to enhance their service and outcomes for children. The childminder completed post training reflections, which supported them to evaluate the impact of learning and identify how it could further strengthen the quality of children's experiences. This helped ensure that learning was meaningfully embedded in practice, leading to improved experiences and outcomes for children.

## 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 childminder was qualified to BA level in Childhood Practice and demonstrated a strong, research informed understanding of how children develop and learn. Their effective engagement with theory and best practice was clearly reflected in the high-quality experiences offered to children. Interactions and daily routines were used as rich learning opportunities, supporting children's emerging literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful, everyday contexts. For example, the young children present enjoyed experimenting with language by repeating sounds and new words, and by preparing children in advance for lunch routines, this helped them develop early mathematical concepts such as time and sequencing. As a result, children made secure foundations and gained skills to support future learning.

The designated playroom offered a well organised and developmentally appropriate learning environment that supported children's curiosity and independence. Clearly labelled, easily accessible shelving enabled children to freely select resources, promoting confident decision making and self-directed play. During our visit, children were highly engaged in their chosen activities and sustained play for extended periods. Their smiles, laughter, and relaxed body language demonstrated that they felt happy, secure, and motivated to explore. Young children enjoyed matching and sorting while developing hand-eye coordination, and using mathematical language to explore coloured bears. This evidenced deep engagement and a strong sense of discovery.

Children confidently shared their views and some spoke enthusiastically about the activities they enjoyed most, demonstrating that they felt listened to and valued. This included a young child who showed a keen interest in learning to write their name, and one who shared, "We had fun in the garden." Feedback from our electronic questionnaires reflected positive experiences, with comments such as, "Julie has lots of fun activities," and, "I like the games we play." Parents also described a wide range of stimulating opportunities, including attending play group, outdoor play, community outings, messy play, and seasonal crafts. Taken together, this demonstrated that the childminder consistently provided a rich, well-balanced programme of play and learning that was responsive to children's interests and supported their independence, progress, and overall development.

The childminder used a range of planning and assessment approaches to support children's learning. Children's ideas were gathered through tools such as the talking and thinking tree and floor books. Planning was mostly responsive to children's interests, for example adapting experiences when children requested specific resources. Some observations were recorded in children's individual books, and progress was tracked using development tracking tools, with assessment information used to plan targeted support. This planning system enabled the childminder to provide experiences that reflected children's needs and interests and to share detailed updates with parents. To continue building on existing processes, children's next steps could be recorded more consistently, and floor books could be further developed to show the breadth, depth and progression of learning.

## 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

Children benefited from consistent, nurturing, and warm care that strongly supported their overall wellbeing. The strong bond between the childminder and the children was evident. Children used the childminder's name frequently and sought their attention and comfort naturally throughout the day. The childminder consistently positioned themselves at children's level, ensuring children's cues for comfort or

support were responded to promptly. As a result, children experienced secure trusting relationships that supported their emotional wellbeing and confidence in the setting.

Parents spoke very positively about the childminder's warm, nurturing approach and the strong relationships they had built with their children. They described the childminder as welcoming, kind, and highly attuned to their children's individual needs. The childminder used a range of communication methods, including verbal discussions, daily diaries for younger children and digital WhatsApp updates, to provide families with consistent, timely, and relevant information about their child's experiences and wellbeing. This promoted strong, open communication and helped parents feel informed and reassured. Parents told us the childminder was approachable, friendly, and went above and beyond to share meaningful moments from their child's day. As a result, families felt confident in the care provided and valued the positive, responsive relationships established.

The childminder offered consistent, nurturing praise and encouragement to celebrate children's achievements and build their confidence. Positive reinforcement was used consistently to support key milestones, such as toilet training which helped children feel proud and motivated. Achievements from both home and the setting were celebrated and displayed, providing a meaningful way to recognise children's progress and share successes. This nurturing approach contributed to children developing a strong sense of accomplishment and self-esteem.

Mealtimes, were calm, unhurried, and thoughtfully organised. The childminder sat alongside the children, creating a relaxed and sociable atmosphere. This supported close supervision and provided opportunities for conversation, role modelling, and language development. The childminder was attentive to children's individual preferences, and provided a healthy, nutritious lunch that reflected children's requests and was inline with best practice guidance.

Effective personal planning was in place for all of the children that we sampled, and was reviewed and updated regularly in partnership with parents. Families who responded to our questionnaire strongly agreed they were fully involved in developing and reviewing their child's plan. The information gathered enabled the childminder to tailor care and support to each child's individual needs. We discussed the importance of ensuring children's 'All About Me' information was kept up to date so that plans remained accurate and reflective of children's current needs. While plans included targets for children, including more detailed support strategies would strengthen clarity about how children's needs are met and demonstrate how progress is being supported over time.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

Detailed evaluations

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
<b>Children play and learn</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
<b>Children are supported to achieve</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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