

Smith, Fiona Child Minding

Kilmarnock

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 February 2026

Service provided by:
Fiona Smith

Service provider number:
SP2003901858

Service no:
CS2003003569

About the service

Fiona Smith provides a childminding service from their home in Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire. The service is in a residential area, across from the local primary school. The children are cared for in a living room, dining room and kitchen/diner. They have access to a downstairs bathroom and an enclosed garden.

The childminder may care for a maximum of eight children at any one time up to 16 years of age; of whom a maximum of six are under 12 years, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. William Smith is employed as an assistant. When working with the childminder the care service will be provided to a maximum of eight children at any one time under the age of 16; of whom a maximum of seven will be under 12, of whom no more than five are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than two are under 12 months. Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate.

At the time of our inspection, seven children were registered with the service. There were three children in attendance during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 February 2026 between 11:05 and 13:40. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with three children using the service
- received three completed questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- 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 were encouraged to give feedback on the service, to ensure it reflected their needs and preferences.
- Children were engaged in enjoyable, meaningful activities that supported their learning and development.
- Daily outdoor experiences promoted children's physical development, enjoyment and connection with their community.
- The childminder's positive, responsive interactions helped extend children's learning and deepen their understanding.
- Children experienced warm, compassionate care that supported strong, trusting relationships and promoted their emotional wellbeing.
- Strong partnerships with families and effective daily communication helped parents feel informed, reassured and connected to their child's experiences.

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

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 demonstrated strong leadership skills, guided by a clear vision to provide a 'home from home experience with lots of opportunities for parent involvement'. We saw this in practice through warm interactions, the welcoming setting and evidence of family engagement. The childminder spoke about their drive to nurture children and encourage them to be themselves. They were proud of the close relationships they had established with families. A parent told us, "Our childminder is exceptional at what they do and [my child] absolutely loves it. It's a very warm, friendly, home from home." As a result, children benefited from a nurturing, secure environment, and families felt confident in the quality of care provided.

Children and families were actively involved in shaping the service. The childminder gathered feedback through questionnaires and conversations, from both families and children. Children were asked about the activities they enjoyed and helped choose snack options, while families shared positive comments about their experiences. This ensured the service reflected the needs and preferences of those using it, helping children feel listened to and families feel included.

To support ongoing development, the childminder had created a realistic and achievable improvement plan. Previous goals had been successfully met, such as strengthening communication through an online messaging app. Some targets were ongoing and continued to guide future developments. This approach ensured continuous improvement and helped maintain high-quality experiences and positive outcomes for children.

The childminder was proactive in keeping up to date with best practice. They spoke about continually developing their service to meet the needs of the children attending. They did this through attending training courses, reading professional newsletters and engaging in online learning. As a result, children benefited from care that was informed, up to date and responsive to their changing needs.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Children were happy and having fun. They confidently chose from a variety of toys and activities that suited their stage of development and interests. These included cars, a farm set, dressing up clothes and dance activities. Additional resources were available for different ages and interests. Favourite games brought children of all ages together in shared play. A parent said, "I think [the childminder] excels at getting all age groups involved in the one game". As a result, children felt safe, included and confident, and the environment supported their wellbeing.

The childminder supported children to learn through play and exploration. During visits to the local park, children learned about ice, and sinking and floating. Early numeracy was supported in natural ways, for example, by reading bus numbers and counting during outings. The childminder promoted literacy through songs, and storytelling with the use of props. They supported language development by asking questions and responding in ways that encouraged children to communicate. These experiences helped children develop curiosity, early skills and confidence in expressing themselves.

Children benefitted from a good balance of indoor and outdoor play. They accessed outdoor spaces daily through walks, park visits or time in the garden, where they enjoyed using the slide, seesaw and play kitchen. Lunch was often eaten outdoors at the picnic table, which families told us they appreciated. Regular outdoor play supported children's physical development, wellbeing and enjoyment.

The childminder had long established links with local community groups. Children regularly visited the library, took part in 'drama through song' sessions and enjoyed activities at the local college. These opportunities helped children feel part of their community and broadened their experiences beyond the home setting.

Interactions between the childminder and children were warm, responsive and respectful. Children were very comfortable and frequently invited the childminder into their play, showing strong, trusting relationships. The childminder extended learning naturally by describing colours, supporting letter recognition and explaining routines clearly, such as tidying toys to keep the floor safe. This helped children feel understood, secure and supported in their learning.

Planning was responsive to children's needs and interests. The childminder observed children during play to assess their learning. Achievements were shared with families through an online messaging app, where parents viewed photographs and videos of their child's successes. Families told us they valued this, which strengthened communication and helped them feel connected to their child's learning. As a result, children benefited from personalised support and strong continuity between home and the service.

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.

Children were treated with compassion, kindness and respect. The childminder got down to their level, made eye contact and listened carefully. They were attuned to children's verbal and non verbal cues and responded sensitively, offering cuddles and support when needed. One parent told us, "[Childminder] is a genuine, caring, nurturing, experienced and knowledgeable person who brings so much to the young people in their care". Consequently, children formed strong, trusting bonds with the childminder. This supported their emotional wellbeing and helped create a nurturing environment where they could thrive.

The childminder supported care routines well. Children who needed sleep had a quiet and comfortable space, and their individual sleep preferences were respected. When children awoke, the childminder offered gentle reassurance and comfort to help them feel safe and settled. This consistency in routine supported children's wellbeing and contributed to healthy development in a calm environment.

Personal care was carried out sensitively, with children's privacy and dignity fully respected. The childminder sang, chatted and explained each step of the care routine. This approach promoted trust, which helped children feel secure, involved and comfortable during these routines.

Children's safety was a clear priority. They were supported to sit safely while eating, hold the buggy during walks and look for traffic when crossing the road. This helped children learn how to keep themselves safe and develop awareness of their surroundings.

The childminder had developed strong, trusting partnerships with parents. Daily communication took place through an online messaging app, where updates, photographs and information were shared. One parent told us, "I get loads of updates throughout the day and always know what is happening. [Childminder's] communication is on a different level!" This helped families feel informed, reassured and closely connected to their child's experiences.

Personal plans were in place and contained relevant, up to date information, including children's likes, dislikes and preferences. This supported the childminder to meet each child's individual needs effectively. The childminder reviewed children's progress regularly, using both formal review paperwork and informal updates through the messaging app. We asked the childminder to ensure these reviews were always recorded in personal plans at least every six months, or sooner if needed.

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	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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