

Karen Robertson Childminder Child Minding

Larbert

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 March 2026

Service provided by:
Karen Robertson

Service provider number:
SP2012984194

Service no:
CS2012312638

About the service

Karen Robertson trading as Karen Robertson Childminding provides a childminding service from their family home, a detached house in Larbert. They are registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 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 family.

Children have access to the downstairs area, which includes the kitchen with a dedicated play area, the lounge, and a downstairs toilet. A spacious enclosed garden is at the back of the property and parks in the local community provide opportunities for children to be active.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 March 2026 between 11:00 and 14:00. 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 three children in the service
- spoke with the childminder
- received three completed questionnaires from parents
- 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

- The childminder demonstrated a well-embedded vision and set of values that created a nurturing, respectful, and supportive environment where children felt secure and thrived.
- To strengthen continuous improvement, the childminder should further involve children and families in shaping the service's vision and improvement plan, ensuring it remains relevant, measurable, and meaningfully reviewed over time.
- Children benefitted from a rich, child-led learning environment, supported by attuned interactions, varied resources, and responsive planning that nurtured their curiosity, creativity, communication, and social development.
- Broadening open-ended, natural materials and deepening observation and challenge would ensure experiences remain stimulating and developmentally appropriate.
- Children's wellbeing was strongly supported through warm and responsive care, with the childminder closely attuned to children's emotions, routines, and individual needs, helping them feel safe, valued, and confident.
- The childminder had a strong understanding of each child's needs, interests, and preferred ways of playing and communicating. This knowledge should now be clearly reflected through regular, meaningful reviews of personal plans to ensure support remains responsive and up to date.

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 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 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 demonstrated a clear vision for the service, which was communicated at the point of enrolment. A set of values also shaped the quality of children's experiences. These values were meaningfully embedded in daily practice. Interactions consistently reflected kindness, respect, and a strong commitment to nurturing children's emotional and social development. The childminder used these values to guide decisions about activities, routines, and the learning environment. This contributed to a warm, fun, and supportive atmosphere where children felt secure, confident, and able to thrive. The ethos of kindness and respect was evident throughout the service, contributing to positive outcomes for children and a sense of belonging for families.

The childminder could now further develop the service's vision, values, and aims by involving children and families more actively in reviewing them. This would help ensure they remain relevant, meaningful, and reflective of the evolving needs and aspirations of those using the service. Strengthening the consultation process with families would help ensure it remains purposeful, supports continuous improvement, and fosters a shared ownership of the service's direction.

The childminder had begun to develop an improvement plan and recognised the importance of embedding this within a more robust and continuous cycle of reflection and action. During the inspection, the childminder demonstrated an understanding of how self-evaluation could support ongoing development and was open and responsive to professional discussion.

The childminder had already identified clear priorities for improvement, including strengthening children's personal plans and developing more consistent observations to inform planning. This showed commitment to enhancing the quality of children's experiences and ensuring that practice continued to evolve.

The improvement plan should now be developed into a living document that is revisited regularly and meaningfully shared with families. It should include measurable actions, realistic timescales, and clear evidence of the impact on children's experiences. Using self-evaluation questions more routinely would support the childminder to review progress, identify what is working well, and highlight areas requiring further development. This would also ensure that improvements are sustained over time (See area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To continue to improve outcomes for children, improvement plan and self-evaluation should be further developed, including meaningfully involving children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard (HSCS) which states that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

Children experienced a warm and stimulating environment where they were able to lead their learning and follow their interests with confidence. They showed sustained engagement and ownership of their play by independently selecting resources that captured their curiosity and used these to shape their experiences. For example, one child confidently chose a favourite board game and set it up independently, smiling as they explored the pieces. As they played, they used imaginative thinking and early storytelling skills, explaining that "the farmer is grumpy" and later expanding this idea to suggest he was upset "because the rabbits ate all his fruit". The childminder supported this rich play through sensitive interactions that extended thinking while ensuring the child remained in control of the direction of play. This balance of child-led exploration and attuned adult support helped children feel motivated to share their ideas. It demonstrated an environment where children make choices and engage in purposeful play that supports their emotional, social, and cognitive development. Children told us: "You get to explore and play different things. [Childminder's name] always has fun stuff planned and always joins in with us. I love playing with the train track with the other children".

A range of resources was available to promote curiosity, problem-solving, and imaginative play, including wooden toys alongside some loose parts, such as rings and beads. These supported children to explore, experiment, and develop early reasoning skills. We discussed how the childminder could further enhance opportunities for open-ended exploration by introducing a wider variety of natural and recycled materials, such as fabric pieces, tubes, crates, shells, stones, and cardboard packaging. Increasing access to these materials would deepen children's creativity and encourage more complex problem-solving.

The childminder used attuned, high-quality interactions to extend children's communication, curiosity, and emerging skills during nursery rhymes, counting activities, and shared games. These interactions reflected a strong understanding of play as the basis for effective learning. Communication was supported through repetition, rich vocabulary, and playful exchanges, while early numeracy was naturally embedded through counting, matching, and turn-taking. Shared games encouraged cooperation and social development. We discussed how open-ended prompts such as "I wonder what might happen if..." could further deepen children's thinking.

The childminder knew the children well and had a clear understanding of their interests, communication styles, and preferred ways of engaging in play. Planning was consistently child-centred, with monthly sessions used to gather children's ideas and shape meaningful learning experiences based on their interests and developmental stages. Nursery rhymes and board games were used as purposeful starting points to extend learning across communication, curiosity, and early numeracy. A parent told us: "I like that [childminder's name] engages with the children in their care to allow them to inform what activities and topics they will be learning about the following month. This includes a variety of seasonal activities [such as] painting, planting, baking and other crafts and our [child] just loves this". Another parent stated that given the wide age range among children, the childminder "balances everyone's needs really well to ensure activities are enjoyed and suitable for all the children".

The childminder recognised the importance of high-quality observations in understanding children's progress and in planning next steps. They had identified a structured template to support more consistent recording. (See area for improvement 1). This will help capture achievements more reliably and ensure planning remains responsive and child-centred. As practice continues to develop, the childminder could also consider ways to introduce appropriate levels of challenge for children who require extra stimulation, ensuring learning experiences remain engaging, extend thinking, and promote deeper exploration.

Areas for improvement

1. To improve outcomes for children, the childminder should develop appropriate systems to record and review children's learning and development. The childminder should use this knowledge to support children's next steps and extend their experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard (HSCS) which states that:

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

The childminder provided consistently warm and responsive care that supported children's emotional and physical wellbeing. Interactions were characterised by kindness, patience, and genuine attentiveness, helping children feel safe and valued within the setting. The childminder was closely attuned to children's cues and changing needs, responding with calm reassurance and gentle guidance that supported children to express their emotions and begin to regulate their feelings. This nurturing approach created a secure base from which children could explore, play, and build trusting relationships. A parent shared with us: "My child has had some school issues, and they have built such a strong relationship they can speak freely to [childminder's name] when they're upset".

Daily routines were used effectively as opportunities to connect with children and promote independence. Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, with children chatting naturally and singing nursery rhymes as they explored different textures and flavours in their food. The childminder supported children to try new foods and enjoy the sensory experience of eating together. There were opportunities to further promote independence by enabling children to take a more active role, such as cutting their own fruit or helping to prepare simple snacks. These small but meaningful steps would support the development of self-help skills.

Play was used to extend learning and strengthen relationships. When children began singing a familiar nursery rhyme, the childminder sensitively followed their lead and introduced an animal-spotting game that sparked laughter, conversation, and shared enjoyment. These warm, playful interactions supported communication, social connection, and early learning, demonstrating the childminder's understanding that everyday routines and spontaneous moments are powerful opportunities to nurture children's wellbeing.

The childminder also recognised the importance of rest and sleep in supporting children's development and ensured that routines were calm and responsive to individual needs. We discussed best practice for safe and comfortable sleep arrangements, including the use of mats for older children and suitable travel cots for younger ones. The childminder was receptive to this guidance and was signposted to 'Safer Sleep' resources to support ongoing reflection and improvement.

Personal plans were in place for each child; however, they had not been reviewed regularly to reflect children's changing needs, interests, and experiences. We discussed the importance of recognising and recording children's evolving preferences and developmental progress so that plans remain meaningful and genuinely support each child's wellbeing. Regular reviews, carried out with parents and, where appropriate, with the children themselves, would help ensure that support strategies remain relevant and are adapted in a timely way. This would strengthen continuity of care and ensure the childminder can respond effectively as children grow and their needs change. (See area for improvement 1).

The childminder had established strong, respectful relationships with families, recognising them as key partners in supporting children's wellbeing. Parents were meaningfully involved through a blend of formal and informal communication, including daily diaries, relaxed conversations at drop-off and collection times, and an annual questionnaire seeking feedback on the service. This consistent, open communication helped parents feel valued and informed, contributing positively to children's sense of security.

Areas for improvement

1. To promote children's health, safety and wellbeing, the service should have a consistent approach to reviewing, recording and updating personal plans in line with guidance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

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 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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