

# Little Farm Childminding Child Minding

Castle Douglas

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
26 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Simone Mcdonald

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000267

**Service no:**  
CS2024000026

## About the service

This service was registered on 19 January 2024, Simone McDonald, referred to as "the childminder" in this report, is registered to provide care to a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. These numbers include the children of the childminder's family.

A temporary condition has also been added to the service's registration, which states that:

From 27 June 2025 to 28 August 2026 (or before if a child leaves the service) the childminder may care for a maximum of 7 children at any one time up to 16 years of age during school holidays (as identified in the variation requested 21 February 2025):

- of whom no more than 7 are under 12 years;
- of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and;
- of whom no more than 1 are under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

Children are cared for at the childminder's home, which is spacious and has access to a large garden. Children have opportunities to be active both indoors and outdoors. They regularly play in the garden and go for adventures into the local area where they have the opportunity to find out about the world around them.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 25 February 2026 and Thursday 26 February 2026. 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 children using the service
- received three completed questionnaires from 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 were cared for in an inclusive, safe and nurturing environment that offered a wide range of opportunities to explore, develop skills and follow their interests.

Parents received comprehensive information about the service, including aims, values, key policies, risk assessments and newsletters. Parents described communication as strong and consistent.

The childminder had a strong focus on individual children's experiences, routinely evaluating how well they were settling and how the environment supported their needs.

Children benefitted from rich outdoor and community experiences, including caring for animals, exploring the farm and engaging in daily outdoor play. Parents confirmed this as a valued aspect of the service.

Parents were highly positive about the quality of care and its impact, reporting significant progress in their children's speech, physical development and confidence.

Parents were welcomed into the setting, with plans to enhance involvement through stay-and-play opportunities.

Interactions were consistently kind, respectful and responsive. Children were consulted through the day, involved in decision making, and confidently sought comfort, support and reassurance.

## 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	4 - Good

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

## Leadership 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were being cared for in an inclusive and safe environment which provided them with a wide variety of opportunities to explore the world around them and develop skills and interests. This was clearly set out in the childminder's statement of aims and function which set out what parents could expect from the service. This was reviewed twice yearly in consultation with parents and children. We advised that moving to an annual programme of policy and procedure reviews would not be more proportionate.

Parents were shown a comprehensive information folder containing the aims, vision and values statement, alongside key policies like healthy eating and child protection. Relevant risk assessments, training certificates and newsletters were also included. Parents told us that the childminder "keeps me well informed and is great at communicating."

The childminder had established a more systematic approach to quality assurance. An annual planner identified essential tasks across the year, including policy reviews, personal plan updates and maintenance checks. Reflective practice was developing well, with a reflective diary capturing progress and planned improvements. This would benefit from being more closely aligned with the headings and reflective questions in the Care Inspectorate quality framework.

Evaluation of individual children's experiences was well embedded. The childminder regularly considered how well children were settling and how the environment supported their needs, ensuring consistently positive experiences.

Children and parents were meaningfully involved in shaping the service. Recent consultation had focused on improving outdoor play, with children's suggestions being implemented. We discussed the potential for a children's committee to further develop children's skills, for example through enterprise activities. Parents reported feeling involved and valued, noting that the childminder "asks for feedback on what could be improved or implemented" and "keeps us informed on what is new and developing".

The childminder was committed to her own continuous learning and development. She kept up to date with changes in practice and made effective use of professional learning opportunities, including online resources. Core training such as Child Protection and First Aid was current, supporting children's safety and wellbeing.

## Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were relaxed, happy and very much at home in the childminder's care. They moved freely around the ground floor and confidently chose where and what they wanted to play with. It was clear that the children trusted the childminder and felt secure in her care.

A very wide range of toys and resources were available in the playroom, and children transported these

freely to support their play. Children's skills and interests were well supported. The childminder consulted with them, observed their play, and listened to their ideas, using this information to plan experiences she knew that they would enjoy.

Children's physical development was very well promoted. They had ample opportunities to climb, balance, run, and dance. Fine motor development was supported through activities such as drawing, painting and playdough, which children helped to make. The childminder shared plans to introduce early cutting skills with younger children.

Children were provided with a variety of experiences and resources which supported language and literacy development. We observed children independently exploring books and contributing to shared story-reading. Children were encouraged to talk, listen and engage with one another. While there were opportunities to develop early numeracy, we suggested this could be strengthened by embedding numeracy more intentionally in play, such as within role-play experiences.

Children benefitted from varied opportunities to explore the local community and enjoy outdoor play. They told us about visiting the new bulls, feeding the chickens and walking around the farm. Parents confirmed the positive outdoor experiences, telling us their child was outside every day and enjoyed water play, swings, the trampoline and feeding the ducks and chickens. The childminder discussed plans to further develop the garden to support planting and growing opportunities, as well as by providing a relaxing outdoor area.

Planning for children's learning and development continued to improve. The childminder was using relevant national guidance, including Realising the Ambition, to support her approach. Observations, children's voices and parental input were used effectively to identify meaningful next steps for each child.

Parents were very positive about the impact of the care provided. One parent told us, "my child loves going to the childminder's and thrives, their developing speech, physical development and confidence has soared since starting there".

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The childminder demonstrated a warm, caring and nurturing approach, which supported the development of positive and trusting relationships with children and their families. She knew each child very well and was attuned to their individual needs and moods, responding sensitively, for example when children tired or needed a cuddle. Parents were very positive about the quality of care, telling us, "I feel I could approach her with anything, without any judgement" and "Simone is very patient, compassionate and I wouldn't want my child anywhere else".

Transitions were well supported, both within daily routines and when children moved between settings, which helped them feel secure and confident. Partnership working with parents was strong. The childminder actively shared information through daily conversations, phone calls and texts. Parents told us she "gives a very thorough handover and keeps me informed throughout the day; I'm never left wondering how my child has gotten on" A termly newsletter, linked to children's developmental areas, provided further insight into activities and included photographs of children's learning.

All children had personal care plans, containing required information. Written strategies and planned next

steps were in place for most children, and we advised that this consistent approach should be extended to all, including school aged children and those with additional needs for support. The childminder was able to clearly explain how she met each child's needs and how partnership with parents supported continuity of care. We discussed the value of documenting these approaches more fully.

Parents were welcomed into the setting, and the childminder plans to extend opportunities for parental involvement, including stay-and-play sessions. Children were encouraged to borrow books and toys to enjoy at home. Interactions were consistently nurturing and respectful. Children were consulted throughout the day and involved in making decisions. They confidently approached the childminder for reassurance or support, including asking for food when hungry, and close, affectionate interactions such as cuddles and shared stories.

Healthy eating was promoted. Parents provided most meals, and the childminder offered a variety of healthy snacks. Mealtimes were sociable, and the childminder modelled positive habits. Parents comment that dietary requirements were respected and that their child "eats very healthily whilst at the childminder's". Children were developing independence through using cutlery, and we suggested enhancing involvement by enabling children to help prepare for meals more often, such as setting the table.

Appropriate medication procedures were in place, although no children required medication at the time of the inspection. Effective infection control practices supported children's health and wellbeing, and children were familiar with routines such as handwashing before meals. They were also learning social skills such as sharing and taking turns.

The childminder was flexible and responsive to the differing needs of children. She ensured that suitable resources, including appropriate furniture and age-relevant toys, were available for all children attending.

## 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

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	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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