

McLay, Diane Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 March 2026

Service provided by:
Diane McLay

Service provider number:
SP2003905729

Service no:
CS2003011514

About the service

Diane McLay provides a childminding service from their property in Maddiston, Falkirk. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family.

The service is close to local amenities, schools and parks. The children have access to the kitchen, lounge area, and bathroom facilities on the ground floor of the premises. There is an enclosed garden suitable for outdoor play at the back of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 March 2026 between 14:10 and 16:10. 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 two children in the service
- Spoke with the childminder
- Received two 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 provided an ethos of nurturing care that supported children's emotional security, helping them feel listened to, respected, and confident in expressing their feelings.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes required further development to strengthen planning, review systems, and enhance the meaningful involvement of children and families.
- Children benefitted from a varied and accessible play environment that promoted independence, exploration, and engagement through responsive interactions.
- Outdoor learning was an important feature of the service, offering enriching experiences that support physical development, curiosity, and connection with nature.
- The childminder made good use of the local community to extend children's learning opportunities.
- Warm, trusting, and individualised care supported children's wellbeing, comfort, and developing independence, contributing to secure and nurturing relationships.
- Personal plans needed more consistent reviewing and updating to ensure they remained accurate, meaningful, and reflective of children's changing needs.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The childminder demonstrated a clear and values-driven vision centred on ensuring that children were safe, nurtured, and emotionally supported. Their approach reflected a strong understanding of the importance of secure relationships and consistent care. Through warm, predictable interactions and a child-led ethos, the childminder created an environment where children felt listened to and respected. This contributed positively to their sense of security and strengthened their emotional resilience. A child shared with us: "She's really caring and I can tell her anything - and she's a good listener". By encouraging open dialogue and offering opportunities for children to express their feelings, the childminder supported them to develop confidence in communicating their needs and experiences. This approach helped promote children's overall wellbeing.

Parents shared positive feedback about the care their children received and the quality of the relationship built with the childminder. One parent commented: "My childminder is very helpful and supportive. They always put my child's wellbeing first, and we share similar values regarding care and upbringing." Another parent noted: "My childminder takes into account both my opinions and my child's opinions when developing the service." These comments highlighted a commitment to partnership working and a service ethos that valued the voices of children and families.

During the inspection, we discussed opportunities to further develop the aims and objectives of the service. We encouraged the childminder to involve children and families in shaping the vision for the service, ensuring it reflects their views and evolving needs. We signposted them to 'A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sector: Childminding' as a helpful resource to support reflective practice and the development of a shared vision.

An improvement plan was at an early stage of implementation. The childminder had identified some priorities aimed at strengthening the quality and consistency of the service. These included expanding planning processes to ensure a more structured, organised, and responsive approach that remains firmly centred on children's needs. To ensure the plan continues to drive progress, the childminder should now revisit the identified priorities and work through the self-evaluation questions within the new framework 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: childminding'. This will help support a continuous cycle of reflection, development, and improvement (**see area for improvement one**).

Further strengthening of quality assurance processes was required to ensure comprehensive oversight of key areas. This should include systematic and regularly scheduled reviews of children's personal plans, monitoring of core aspects of service delivery, identification of training needs, and tracking progress in implementing the new quality framework. Strengthening these systems would support greater consistency and ensure that decision-making is informed, reflective, and aligned with best practice.

Families benefitted from regular communication, including daily conversations and digital updates that sometimes featured photographs to share children's experiences. The childminder gathered views through ongoing informal discussions, ensuring that families felt included and informed.

The childminder recognised the need to refresh and update their skills and knowledge and acknowledged that further training was required to ensure practice remained current and aligned with national guidance. Embedding the new quality improvement framework into practice would support reflective practice and sustained, meaningful improvement across the service (**see area for improvement two**).

Areas for improvement

1. To continue to improve outcomes for children, the improvement plan and self-evaluation processes should be further developed, including identifying realistic targets, reviewing the impact of the implemented changes on the children's experiences and meaningfully involving children and families in the development of the service.

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).

2. To promote positive outcomes for children, the childminder should further develop their knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. This should include, but not limited to, becoming familiar with best practice documents and undertake professional reading and training to support high quality play experiences and outcomes for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes'. (HSCS 3.14)

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 play environment that supported choice, independence, and exploration. They were able to select freely from a range of toys and resources, which were age-appropriate, and easily accessible. This enabled children to direct their own play and follow their interests, contributing to enjoyable and supportive learning experiences. The childminder participated in play in a positive, playful manner and demonstrated a ability to tune into children's verbal and non-verbal communication, responding sensitively and appropriately to extend their engagement and curiosity.

Parents spoke highly of the quality of play opportunities and the childminder's nurturing approach. One parent commented: "My childminder is very caring and supportive. My child has access to a range of fun and educational activities, plays outdoors regularly, and can rest or relax when needed. I feel confident that my child is safe and happy in her care."

Children were observed to be relaxed, happy, and engaged in play. Warm, responsive interactions contributed positively to their sense of wellbeing and belonging.

The childminder demonstrated a clear understanding of individual children's personalities, preferences, and emotional cues, which supported their emotional development and ensured their engagement in learning experiences.

Outdoor play formed a meaningful part of children's daily experiences. Parents described a variety of outings and activities that enriched children's learning. One parent noted: "My child is very often involved in a range of fun and educational experiences, such as trips to the park, swings, the farm, museums, and even hiking." Another commented: "[My child] likes outdoor play and gets opportunities to get outside and explore, not only in the garden but also parks/wood." These experiences supported children's physical development, curiosity, and appreciation of nature.

Children's achievements were consistently recognised through praise and encouragement, helping to build their self-esteem and confidence. Opportunities for early literacy, language, and numeracy were naturally embedded within everyday routines and play experiences. As a result, children were making good progress.

Planning was informal and responsive, shaped around children's interests and natural curiosities. The childminder used photographs to share experiences with families, strengthening communication and supporting parents to feel connected to their child's learning.

To further enhance this approach, we discussed the importance of strengthening observation and recording practices. More detailed and consistent observations would support the childminder to identify children's learning needs and plan next steps more effectively (**see area for improvement one**).

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 demonstrated a consistently warm, caring, and nurturing approach to supporting children. Interactions were characterised by reassurance, gentle guidance, and appropriate physical comfort, helping children feel safe and emotionally secure. This enabled them to build trusting, meaningful relationships that supported children to feel valued and confident in the setting.

A clear emphasis was placed on children's rest and emotional wellbeing. Children were offered opportunities to rest, sleep, or relax as needed, and this was sensitively supported within a calm and settled environment. Parents confirmed that their children's needs were prioritised, with one noting: "My child can always rest, sleep, or relax when needed. There is a quiet space available, and the childminder ensures my child has time to unwind during the day."

Personal care was carried out in a manner that upheld privacy, dignity, and safety. The childminder offered gentle verbal reassurance during toileting routines and supported the child to wash their hands afterwards, modelling the steps and reinforcing good hygiene habits. This approach encouraged independence while ensuring children felt secure and respected. Interactions during these routines were warm, supportive, and confidence-building, contributing positively to children's emerging self-care skills and overall wellbeing.

During discussions, the childminder demonstrated a good level of knowledge about each child's individual needs, interests, and preferred methods of communication. However, personal plans had not been reviewed within the required timescales. While some key information had been recorded, plans were outdated and therefore did not fully reflect children's evolving needs. Children would benefit from plans being revisited and refreshed collaboratively with families to ensure information remains current, meaningful, and responsive (**see area for improvement one**). One parent reflected, "I have not been particularly involved in developing or reviewing my child's personal plan, but I am happy with the care provided." Another noted: "I am always welcome to discuss my child's care, play, and learning. I can call, send a message, or simply visit to have a conversation."

The childminder had established strong, trusting relationships with families. Parents described feeling welcomed, respected, and well-informed. Regular daily conversations, photographs, and messages helped parents stay connected to their child's day and contributed to a strong sense of reassurance. As one parent summarised: "My child feels safe with [childminder's name] and I trust [them] completely." This effective communication and partnership working were key strengths of the service.

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 state 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) and 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

Complaints

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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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