

Murray, Hazel Child Minding

Dalkeith

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 March 2026

Service provided by:
Hazel Cowan

Service provider number:
SP2007965806

Service no:
CS2007156065

About the service

The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children under the age of 16 years, of whom no more than three will not yet be attending primary school and of whom no more than one will be under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The childminder works in partnership with the local council.

The childminding service operates from the childminder's home in Mayfield, Midlothian. Children have access to the living room, kitchen with dining area and upstairs toilet. The garden is directly off the kitchen. The childminder's home is near local amenities, including schools, shops and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 24 March 2026 between 09:00 and 10:05 and Friday 27 March 2026 between 09:45 and 11:00. 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:

- spoke with three children using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- reviewed on line questionnaires returned by four families
- 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 experienced nurturing, warm and responsive care that supported their wellbeing, security and confidence.
- The childminder provided a rich range of play and learning experiences, both indoors and in the community, which supported children's development and reflected their interests.
- Families spoke highly of the quality of care, describing strong relationships, open communication and a welcoming, supportive environment.
- The childminder demonstrated commitment to improvement, responding promptly to feedback by updating personal planning formats and reviewing aspects of practice.
- The environment was maintained to a good standard, with safety measures in place and plans to further enhance outdoor learning opportunities.
- Policies, training updates and written aims needed further development to reflect current practice and support ongoing quality assurance.

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

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| Leadership | 4 - Good |
| Children play and learn | 4 - 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 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: Leadership and Management of Staff and Resources.

The childminder created a warm, welcoming environment where families felt at ease and the strong values were evident in the caring, family-centred atmosphere throughout the setting. Families consistently described the childminder as approachable, caring and professional. They shared that they felt able to speak openly about their child's needs and appreciated the supportive approach. One family commented they could, "Go to the childminder about anything", while another described the childminder as, "Kind, accommodating and always willing to listen". These views demonstrated the positive relationships that shaped the setting and the trust families placed in the childminder.

During the inspection, the written vision, values and aims were discussed. These had not been updated for some time and no longer fully reflected the responsive nature of the setting and the strong relationships within it. The childminder agreed these should be refreshed to better communicate the ethos of the setting to new and existing families.

The childminder used national guidance, such as the Health and Social Care Standards and Curriculum for Excellence, to inform ongoing development. Learning priorities had recently been reviewed to better reflect children's stages of development and families commented that their children's needs were understood and supported appropriately.

Personal planning had not been updated for a while and did not fully capture children's current progress or needs. Despite this, families said they valued being involved in planning and reviewing their child's care. Following discussion during the inspection, the childminder took immediate action by developing new personal plan formats that captured children's current age and stage and allowed for meaningful contributions from both families and children. This prompt response reflected a strong commitment to improvement and partnership working.

Policies were in place but needed updating, particularly around medication. Through discussion, the childminder recognised the importance of ensuring all policies remained current. Training was mostly in place, with first aid recently renewed and child protection training valid. Food hygiene training had expired, but the childminder had already booked updated training.

The environment was well maintained, with risk assessments and safety checks completed regularly. Families described the setting as, "Safe, secure and welcoming". The childminder recognised that the outdoor area needed improvement following winter weather and planned to refresh it to enhance outdoor play.

Communication with families was a clear strength of the childminder's leadership. The childminder used individual and group messaging to keep families informed about their child's experiences, and families told us they valued the regular updates. Daily handovers were detailed and meaningful, giving families clear insight into routines, wellbeing and the activities their child had taken part in. These conversations also provided opportunities for shared reflection, where the childminder and families discussed any changes that

might better support their child. Families described how these ongoing discussions helped them understand the setting well and feel fully involved in shaping their child's experiences.

The group messaging platform also supported a strong sense of community among families. They told us that it helped them connect with one another and share helpful hints and tips on topics such as sleep routines. This collaborative approach not only strengthened relationships between families but also created an additional layer of support within the service. Families described feeling welcomed, informed and reassured, highlighting the childminder's open and reflective approach to communication and partnership working.

Overall, leadership and management were effective, with evidence of responsiveness and commitment to improvement. Updating written aims, refreshing policies and embedding improved personal planning systems would strengthen practice further.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

Children experienced a wide range of engaging and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and families spoke very positively about the experiences provided. They described the setting as offering, "Varied activities", "Age appropriate experiences" and an environment where children, "Thrived" and "Learned so much".

The environment supported confident and independent exploration, with children able to choose from a wide selection of resources, move freely and follow familiar routines. Opportunities within the daily schedule encouraged independence, including tidying, selecting play materials and practising early life skills. Families told us they had seen noticeable improvements in their children's confidence, communication and social development as a result.

The childminder was responsive to children's interests. For example, when a child brought stones from home, the childminder adapted the day's experiences to explore these creatively. Families appreciated this flexibility, expressing that the childminder was, "Great at following their child's interests" and "Always planning activities that meets my child's developmental needs". This responsiveness ensured activities were relevant, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate, contributing positively to children's learning experiences.

Children had access to a wide selection of loose parts resources that encouraged exploration, creativity and problem solving. These included natural and open ended materials such as wooden items, shells, sticks and stones. Additional materials, such as golf tees with polystyrene, were used to support fine motor development and early investigation skills. The childminder regularly refreshed these resources and gathered ideas from social media platforms, helping to keep play experiences varied, engaging and reflective of current approaches in early learning and childcare. Families described the environment as, "Full of toys and activities any child would dream of", and they appreciated the opportunities for creativity and exploration.

The childminder mostly used local community spaces to support physical activity and exploration. Children attended community groups, parks, woodlands and libraries. Families commented that their children "loved

Bookbugs", enjoyed going to the park and their children were outdoors, "Almost every time they were there". Children also benefited from real life learning within the community. For example, during visits to the local post office, they took part in activities such as posting parcels and engaging in simple role play linked to everyday routines. The childminder supported this by offering a small number of coins from her purse, allowing children to explore early numeracy and money-handling skills through imaginative play. Families told us their children enjoyed these outings, which helped them develop an early understanding of familiar community roles and everyday experiences.

The garden area included artificial grass and some outdoor equipment. The childminder had already identified that a large trampoline was no longer suitable and planned to remove it to improve safety and make better use of the space. Enhancing this space would allow children more opportunities for spontaneous outdoor play at the setting, complementing the wide range of community outings already offered.

The childminder had begun strengthening their planning and observation of play and learning processes. Scrapbooks had been introduced to record photographs and observations linked to the wellbeing indicators. The childminder used developmental checklists and early literacy pathways to support tracking of children's learning. Families appreciated the detailed updates about their child's day and learning. The childminder asked for our advice on writing observations and we discussed how these could more clearly show what children were learning and where appropriate, identify next steps. We also explored how linking observations to children's interests and developmental milestones and revisiting these to show progress, could further strengthen practice. The childminder was positive and engaged and showed clear commitment to developing this area.

Overall, the childminder provided a rich and varied learning environment. Continued development of planning and assessment processes would further enhance children's learning journeys.

Children are supported to achieve **5 - Very Good**

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

Quality indicator: Nurturing Care and Support.

Children experienced warm, consistent and highly nurturing care, and this was reflected strongly in the feedback shared by families. They described the setting as, "Welcoming," "Trustworthy" and a place where their children felt, "Comfortable, confident and content". Several families expressed how sad they would be when their child moved on to nursery, highlighting the close and meaningful bonds that had developed over time. These relationships were a core strength of the setting and contributed significantly to children's emotional wellbeing.

A relaxed, positive atmosphere was evident throughout the visit. Children approached the childminder with ease, demonstrating trust and a sense of security. Older children confidently sought support, shared ideas and invited the childminder into their play. They received gentle encouragement, reassurance and praise, helping to build self-esteem and confidence. Achievements were celebrated together, whether mastering a new puzzle, completing a creative task or successfully using their unique 'special' technique to put on their coat. The pride children took in these moments showed how valued and capable they felt within the setting.

The childminder supported children through transitions and moments where they needed additional reassurance, using calm and consistent strategies that helped them feel secure and confident. Families told us the childminder, "Understood their child's cues well" and knew how to support them effectively. Daily routines played an important role in promoting independence and self-help skills. Children were supported to take part in tidying, choosing activities, practising early self-care and developing social skills. Families highlighted noticeable progress in areas such as patience, sharing and emotional regulation, describing how these developments were reinforced through the childminder's consistent, nurturing approach.

Younger children also benefitted from sensitive, attuned care. During the visit, a younger child received familiar soothing before settling to sleep, demonstrating the childminder's calm and consistent approach to meeting individual needs. Families described the home as "warm and comforting," and appreciated that their children could rest or sleep whenever they needed to. Sleep routines were adapted sensitively; some children slept in travel cots, while others napped in buggies during walks. Families told us they felt reassured by these routines and appreciated being kept well informed about how long their child had slept and how settled they had been.

Children's wellbeing was further supported through relaxed, sociable mealtimes. The childminder provided a range of nutritious lunches and snacks and took care to meet dietary needs and preferences. Children were encouraged to try new foods at their own pace, helping them develop confidence and positive attitudes towards healthy eating. Mealtimes were welcoming and inclusive, with children sitting together at the table and younger children supported safely in highchairs. For those who stayed later in the day, the childminder also provided dinner, and families valued that their child was included as part of the childminder's family. This contributed to the warm, homely environment and strengthened children's sense of belonging.

Engagement with families was a significant strength. Communication was warm, regular and meaningful. Families described feeling welcomed into the home and valued the detailed daily handovers that helped them stay informed about routines, wellbeing, learning and development. They also appreciated the messaging group, which enabled families to connect with one another, share experiences and offer support around common topics such as sleep routines. This contributed to a supportive, community like network around the children.

Overall, nurturing care and support were of a very high standard. Children experienced strong, trusting relationships, sensitive care and an emotionally attuned environment that promoted their wellbeing, confidence and sense of security.

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

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| 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 | 5 - Very Good |
| Nurturing care and support | 5 - Very Good |

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