

Sarah's Childminding Child Minding

Saltcoats

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
4 March 2026

Service provided by:
Sarah McGookin

Service provider number:
SP2015986719

Service no:
CS2015335540

About the service

Sarah McGookin, trading as Sarah's childminding is registered to provide a childminding service from their home in Saltcoats, North Ayrshire. Children have access to the living room, kitchen and upstairs bathroom. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 6 children under the age of 16 years, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and no more than 1 is less than 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the children of the childminder's family.

At the time of our inspection 11 children were registered to attend the service. Most children attended on a part time basis.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place on Wednesday 04 March 2026 between 10:00 and 12:15. 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 using the service
- reviewed feedback from two families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life for children using the service
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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 with warmth and kindness.
- Children experienced a play and learning environment that promoted their independence and allowed them to make choices and follow their interests.
- Children's routines from were respected and adhered to by the childminder to ensure continuity of care.
- Children and families' views were gathered regularly, helping everyone feel included and valued.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes should be further developed to support the continuous development of the service.

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 service's vision, values, and aims were in place and had recently been updated. The values of happiness and wellbeing were evident in the warm, caring environment, where children were supported to feel safe, settled, and happy. The childminder should now further involve children and families in any future reviews to ensure these continue to reflect their shared aspirations for the service.

Policies and procedures were shared with families during enrolment. They were well written and regularly reviewed to ensure they aligned with legislation and current guidance. This helped ensure parents were well informed about how the service operated and set out clear expectations for the care their child would receive.

The childminder's current approach to self-evaluation involved them recording monthly statements in their diary. We have asked the childminder to develop more formalised systems to support meaningful reflection on their practice and the quality of their service. This should include identifying strengths, as well as areas for further development. The childminder would benefit from using the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland (2025) guidance, 'A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sectors: Childminding', to inform ongoing evaluation. This could help establish a more robust and systematic approach to continuous improvement, ensuring children and families benefit from a service that is consistently developing and responsive to their needs (see area for improvement 1).

The childminder would benefit from building on their self-evaluation processes by routinely gathering and using the views of children and families to inform improvement planning. By combining reflective practice with meaningful feedback, the childminder would be well placed to create a clear service improvement plan that identifies priorities for development and sets out actions to enhance outcomes for children. This could ensure children and families benefit from a service that reflects on its practice and strives to improve outcomes over time.

The childminder's engagement in professional development strengthened their ability to support children's care, learning, and wellbeing. It would be beneficial for them to record reflections following any training. This would help them evaluate how new learning had influenced their practice, support them to identify gaps in knowledge, and tailor any future learning to meet the needs of individual children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. The childminder should develop quality assurance processes to support ongoing improvement of the service. This should include using self-evaluation approaches informed by national guidance and involving children and families in reviewing key aspects of the service. Strengthening these processes should help the childminder identify what is working well, plan targeted improvements, and ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

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

Some children's artwork was displayed within the childminder's kitchen, helping to create a warm and personalised environment. This celebrated children's achievements and promoted a strong sense of belonging, showing children that they mattered.

Children experienced a play and learning environment that promoted independence, curiosity, and engagement. The childminder's living room contained accessible, open shelved storage that allowed children to view and choose resources independently. These included construction materials, cause and effect toys, small world play, and a range of art activities. During our visit, children enjoyed imaginative play such as dressing up, exploring small world figures, and using different tones of voice and expressions to represent characters, which supported their language and literacy development. The environment was arranged to enable children to explore freely, make choices, and follow their interests. As a result, children developed increasing independence as they made choices and engaged confidently in self-directed play.

Planning processes were responsive to children's ideas and interests, with the childminder using their knowledge of each child to provide meaningful activities. We discussed the benefits of developing more formal planning processes, including recording observations of children's learning. This would help ensure play and learning experiences are increasingly individualised and relevant. We also encouraged the childminder to more clearly document when experiences are offered in direct response to specific children's interests. Strengthening planning records in this way would better demonstrate how responsive practice supports and enhances children's learning and development.

While the childminder's back garden was not in use at the time of our inspection, they made good use of community resources to promote children's physical development and support their wellbeing. Outings included soft play sessions, Wiggle and Giggle group, and visits to local parks. Risk assessments for outings were in place but had not been reviewed for several years. We discussed that these should now be revisited and updated to ensure they remain current and reflective of any potential risks. This would further enhance children's safety within their wider community.

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

Children experienced warm, gentle and nurturing care, helping them feel safe and valued. The childminder offered comfort, affection and cuddles, which supported children to feel secure and confident. The childminder's calm, soothing manner helped children regulate their emotions and build trusting attachments. When children were upset or needed support, the childminder responded promptly and sensitively asking if they would like comforted and respecting their preferences. This approach strengthened children's emotional wellbeing.

Parents spoke positively about their childminding experience. Both families who responded to our questionnaire strongly agreed that they had a good relationship with the childminder and were happy with the care and support their child received. Comments included, "Sarah is kind, caring, compassionate, professional, trustworthy, honest and fantastic at her job," and "Sarah is very supportive, caring and nurturing. She always has the children's best interests at heart." As a result of the childminder's nurturing approach with families, they experienced trusting and respectful relationships, which contributed to children feeling secure, valued, and well supported in the setting.

Children were relaxed and moved around freely, demonstrating a strong sense of belonging. They were very comfortable with one another, and the childminder sensitively navigated their interactions, reinforcing the house rule of being kind to all when they gently pushed each other. This supported children to develop cooperative play skills and an understanding of empathy by considering how their actions might make others feel. As a result, children experienced a nurturing environment that helped them build positive relationships and develop early social and emotional skills.

Mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried, and supportive. Parents provided packed lunches from home with a range of healthy options. These were offered to children in line with their individual routines and preferences. The childminder sat with the children and supported a young child with their self-help skills, creating a warm and sociable atmosphere that supported positive interactions. One parent told us, "Sarah encourages my child to eat and eat well, their skills with cutlery have come on leaps and bounds because of Sarah." The childminder should now further improve infection prevention and control practices by ensuring children wash their hands before and after meals, and by cleaning the table prior to food being served. This would further strengthen children's health and wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place for all children and were reviewed regularly with parents. One parent told us, "Sarah sends me regular updates and we go through my child's plan often." Plans included developmental targets that supported children's progress. These could be strengthened further by recording parents' contributions, their views on their child's targets and clearly identifying how the targets will be met. This would ensure children benefit from clear, consistent support that is tailored to their individual needs, and families would experience stronger partnership working through shared understanding of how targets will be achieved.

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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