

The Little Chickens Child Minding

Dundee

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 March 2026

Service provided by:
Gail Mason

Service provider number:
SP2023000537

Service no:
CS2024000216

About the service

Gail Mason provides a service from their home and operates under the name The Little Chickens. The service is 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 include the children of the childminder's family/household.

Other conditions include minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate. Overnight care will not be provided. At the time of the inspection there were six children registered with the service.

Children have access to a dedicated playroom, bathroom, and enclosed garden. The service is situated in a residential area near the Claverhouse area within Dundee, close to schools, parks, and public transport.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 March 2026 between 09:00 and 12:30. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke/spent time with three young people using the service
- received one completed questionnaire and spoke with two families using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- The childminder demonstrated a reflective and positive approach to leading their service.
- Strengthening key policies and procedures would further support children's safety and wellbeing.
- A warm, inviting, and well planned environment promoted children's confidence and independence.
- Children benefitted from responsive, high quality play and learning experiences that supported their development.
- Children experienced nurturing, compassionate care that supported their emotional wellbeing and helped build positive relationships.
- Families were recognised as valued partners in contributing to children's play and learning.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - 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 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The childminder demonstrated reflective and committed practice. This meant that their leadership aligned with their stated aims and objectives of the service: "to provide a safe, nurturing, clean, and welcoming environment where children can eat, play, learn, and grow." Recent professional learning had positively influenced their approach. This had led them to consider revisiting the service vision with children and families. This could help to strengthen a shared understanding and celebrate existing strengths. Enhancing opportunities for children and families to contribute to shaping the service, would further promote an inclusive environment responsive to their needs.

Early self evaluation processes were developing and beginning to support the childminder to identify key strengths and areas for improvement. They were able to describe changes made to practice in response to children's individual needs. This included, adapting the environment to reflect children's emerging interests. The childminder had also identified the need to enhance sensory experiences and had plans to adjust their space. We discussed methods that could help them demonstrate progress over time. Further engagement with the Care Inspectorate document, 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: childminding,' would support more robust and meaningful self evaluation. This would enable the childminder to reflect on the impact of improvements and enhance outcomes for children.

Families were actively involved in the service through a range of communication approaches. Online platforms were used effectively to share key information, photographs, and updates about children's daily experiences. Families spoken with described positive and trusting relationships with the childminder and felt well supported. One parent commented, "[The childminder] is friendly, caring, and makes us feel comfortable." Planned stay and play sessions offered families opportunities to gain insight into their child's time in the service. We discussed further ways to gather families' views to meaningfully inform improvement planning. Strengthening this approach would further value families as partners and contribute to positive outcomes for children.

Policies and procedures were in place and, in most cases, supported effective management of the service. We identified several policies that would benefit from review and further development. These included the missing child, safe sleep, child protection, medication, and accident and incident policies. We signposted the childminder to relevant best practice guidance to support this work. Strengthening these documents would enhance clarity for families and ensure robust processes are in place to promote children's safety and wellbeing.

The childminder participated in regular training to support their ongoing professional development and used informal reflection to identify how learning had influenced practice. As a result, children benefited from a childminder who demonstrated continued commitment to improving the quality of the service.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good**Quality Indicator: Children experience high quality facilities**

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.

The childminder's home provided a warm, welcoming, and dedicated play space where children could explore safely and confidently. Children accessed the toilet area with appropriate support, which promoted independence and safety. Age and stage appropriate resources were readily available, and enabled children to make choices and engage in play that reflected their interests. High quality materials had been carefully selected to meet children's needs and respond to their changing preferences. As a result, children moved freely throughout the space and showed confidence within the childminder's home. The well organised and nurturing environment enhanced children's play, learning, and overall experiences.

The childminder recognised the value of the local community in promoting children's development. Regular outings to parks, Bookbug sessions, and soft play enriched children's social and physical skills. Although children were not outdoors during the inspection, evidence showed they generally benefited from daily access to outdoor play. These opportunities supported children to explore the wider world and develop their understanding of different environments.

Children were actively involved in influencing their experiences. The childminder consulted with them in age appropriate ways, including conversations about preferred activities, outings, and snack choices. These opportunities helped children feel included, respected, and able to meaningfully shape their environment.

The environment was clean, safe, and well maintained. The childminder's home was secure as doors were locked, and gates were used to protect children. Personal care routines were carried out respectfully, which supported children's privacy and dignity. Children were changed using a wipeable mat, and the childminder used appropriate personal protective equipment while cleaning the area afterwards. Children were asked for permission before nappy changes, which reinforced the nurturing and respectful practice. Regular handwashing was consistently promoted. This helped to maintain a safe and hygienic environment.

Risk benefit assessments were in place for activities, and supported children's independence while helping them learn about safe choices. Weekly checklists for the home environment recorded actions taken to maintain safety. We asked the childminder to further develop home risk assessments so that potential hazards and control measures were clearly identified. Accident and incident records would also benefit from greater clarity to ensure accurate reflection of when events occurred. These improvements would further enhance children's safety and wellbeing.

Children's personal information was stored securely. We asked the childminder to develop a CCTV policy to ensure families' privacy was fully protected. We also asked that they register and review their data handling processes in line with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This would further strengthen GDPR (General Data protection Regulation) arrangements and help maintain confidentiality.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Play learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children experienced rich, engaging play and learning opportunities that supported their enjoyment and development. They settled quickly in the childminder's home and confidently participated in activities they had chosen. Children showed sustained focus during play, for example when exploring rice in a tuff tray and experimenting with filling and emptying containers. A parent told us, "Always learning and having fun, like building rockets and going to soft play with friends." The variety and quality of play experiences contributed to children's strong motivation to explore and learn.

Play spaces were thoughtfully planned to reflect children's interests and promoted their developing skills. Resources were accessible, inviting, and encouraged children to direct their own play with confidence. The childminder responded sensitively to children's different behaviours and needs and provided resources that supported regulation and curiosity. For example, blankets and dens offered opportunities for children to create enclosed, calming spaces, while tools such as tweezers in tuff trays promoted fine motor development. These approaches encouraged children to be imaginative, inquisitive, and creative in their play.

Children were relaxed, happy, and confident in the childminder's care. Warm and nurturing relationships supported children to feel secure and ready to explore. The childminder interacted in a meaningful and purposeful way, extending play and supporting learning. Literacy and numeracy were naturally embedded throughout daily experiences. Books were used effectively, new vocabulary was introduced, and open ended questions helped develop children's thinking skills. During playdough activities, children counted ingredients and explored descriptive language as they discussed the dough's texture. One child described it as "sticky" as they explored it with their hands. These interactions strongly supported children's communication, language, and early mathematical understanding.

The childminder had a very good understanding of children's developmental stages and used close observation to inform their planning. An online app was used to record children's achievements and share learning with families. Families valued these observations as they helped them to be part of their child's experiences. Observations contributed meaningfully to planning and supported positive outcomes for each child. We discussed opportunities to make some observations more personalised and directly linked to individual children. This would build on the strong existing practice and further enhance tracking of children's progress and development.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good**Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support**

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.

Children were happy, relaxed, and comfortable in the childminder's care. Interactions were warm and caring, which supported children to feel secure. The childminder responded sensitively with cuddles, comfort, and reassurance when needed. Families were welcomed warmly into the home, and they told us they valued the time they were given to settle their children. One parent commented, "Always chat at drop off and pick up. I feel comfortable to say anything about my child's needs." These nurturing relationships supported children's emotional wellbeing and helped build strong, positive attachments.

Daily routines were flexible and responsive, which allowed children to follow their interests at their own pace. This supported children to feel respected and to have ownership of their experiences. For example, the childminder asked children what they would like to do throughout the morning, enabling them to influence the direction of their day. This contributed to children feeling valued and included.

Mealtimes supported children's health and wellbeing. The childminder provided healthy meals and snacks in line with Setting the Table guidance, ensuring nutritious options were available. Children were consulted about menu choices, which meant they enjoyed the food provided. Mealtimes were a relaxed experience, which gave children opportunities to develop social skills. The childminder sat with children and gently encouraged them to try a range of foods. We discussed ways to extend children's involvement in mealtime routines, such as supporting food preparation or serving. This would help strengthen children's independence and build practical life skills.

The childminder knew children well and worked closely with families to understand their routines, preferences, and individual needs. This understanding was evident in daily practice, as the childminder recognised when children needed reassurance, challenge, or support. To support ongoing consistency, we asked that children's written personal plans, 'all about me' information, and permission forms are formally reviewed at least every six months in line with legislation. Adaptations to routines, interactions, and play experiences helped children feel secure and confident. Daily conversations and online communication systems ensured information was current and supported personalised care. This supported consistent care and promoted continuity for children.

Children's need for rest was acknowledged, and the childminder described established routines to support sleep. Children were supervised appropriately while resting, and safe sleep was mostly well supported. However, not all sleep arrangements aligned fully with best practice guidance. We asked the childminder to ensure that all children sleep in cots or on sleep mats, in line with current safe sleep guidance. Developing a safe sleep policy and strengthening this practice would help maintain children's safety during rest times.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - 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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