

Fees C.M. Service Child Minding

Aberdeen

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 March 2026

Service provided by:
Fiona McDonald

Service provider number:
SP2012984125

Service no:
CS2012312146

About the service

Fees C.M. Service provides a childminding service from their home in Aberdeen. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age of whom no more than three are not yet of an age to attend primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service is close to the local primary school and green spaces. Children have access to the living room, kitchen/diner, play room, toilet and a fully enclosed garden.

Two children were present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17 March 2026 between 08:20 and 12:40. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 five responses to our request for feedback 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 at the heart of the service and were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families very well.
- Children experienced very warm and responsive care meaning they felt safe and loved.
- The childminder had a very good understanding of how children develop and learn which was reflected in the experiences offered.
- The childminder made good use of the outdoors, at their home and in the wider community.
- The childminder should now engage with the new quality improvement framework for childminding and document developments, sharing these with children and families.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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**.

The childminder had a clear set of vision, values, and aims in place, which aligned with the wellbeing indicators and were evident in day to day practice. During the inspection, children were seen to be nurtured, respected, and encouraged to take appropriate responsibility. While these statements formed a strong foundation, the childminder should consider reviewing and refreshing them with children and families to ensure shared ownership. The principles were demonstrated in routines; for example, young children showed responsibility by switching off lights and placing used flannels in the washing machine. These examples highlighted the childminder's commitment to promoting positive values and creating an environment that supported children's independence, emotional wellbeing, and sense of responsibility.

Children's and families' views were regularly sought and valued. The childminder used the Connect App to share daily diaries and photographs, which ensured families remained well informed about their child's experiences. In addition to digital updates, the childminder made time to speak with parents and carers each day, strengthening relationships and supporting open communication. Parents and children were also invited to complete questionnaires. Feedback was consistently positive, with families reporting that the childminder offered good care and support, communicated well, and helped their children feel safe. Although no suggestions for improvement were offered, the childminder explained that they remained open to new ideas and welcomed feedback. Parents told us they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the service. One parent shared; "[The childminder] is always informing us of proposed additions or changes and is welcoming of any input or suggestions". These approaches demonstrated strong and responsive communication practices, fostering a collaborative approach to children's care and developments.

The childminder engaged very effectively with the previous quality framework and used reflective questions to guide improvement. They recorded the impact of developments within their improvement plan, showing clear links between reflection, action, and outcomes. Recent areas of focus included nature, care, and support, as well as helping children understand their feelings. Consistent routines and strong communication with families supported children to develop emotional security and trust in adults, which was clearly evident during inspection. We discussed how the new quality improvement framework (QIF) for childminding could be used in a similar way to support ongoing development. Children and families were kept informed about changes, and the children themselves were keen to help, often saying, "We're helping." A display board was created to support families' understanding of play and learning, featuring wellbeing indicators, the UNCRC, and photos and comments from families. This illustrated the childminder's commitment to continuous improvement and reflective practice.

Quality assurance processes supported the smooth running of the service. Policies were regularly reviewed and shared with parents, although the sleep policy should be updated to fully reflect safe sleep practices discussed during inspection. While completing a relevant qualification, the childminder maintained all core training and undertook additional learning linked to children's needs. Training on supporting children's thinking encouraged the use of modelling, conversation, and open-ended questioning, which was evident during inspection. The childminder kept up to date with best practice guidance, including 'Setting the Table,' and encouraged children to choose wholemeal bread. Overall, the childminder demonstrated effective quality assurance and a strong commitment to professional learning, ensuring practice remained current, reflective, and aligned with best practice to support positive outcomes for children.

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**.

The childminder was currently undertaking a BA in Early Childhood and shared that their studies were positively influencing many aspects of their practice. They described how professional literature, including 'Planning in the Moment' and 'Realising the Ambition', had shaped their approaches to observation, planning and supporting children's learning. This learning was evident during the inspection. For example, when a child repeatedly transported vehicles outdoors, the childminder recognised this as a schema rather than a behaviour to be redirected and ensured resources were accessible to support this interest. This demonstrated growing confidence in applying theory to practice in ways that meaningfully supported children's development.

The childminder made effective use of the dining/kitchen area and playroom, with resources stored at child height to promote independence and choice. The environment was homely and welcoming, with photos and children's artwork displayed, helping children develop a strong sense of belonging. During the inspection, children were motivated and engaged in play, moving naturally between activities appropriate to their developmental stage. The childminder supported children sensitively at their level, whether seated at the small table or on the floor, enabling children to remain engaged and confident in their play.

Outdoor play was clearly valued and well embedded in daily practice. Children played confidently in the mud kitchen, mixing herbs with water, scooping and pouring, and using a kettle to fill cups. Another child independently accessed a ride-on car before exploring scooping with a digger. Outdoor resources were well organised, and children knew where to find them and how to use them. Children also engaged in creative experiences, such as making animal faces with stickers, and showed curiosity and excitement when observing caterpillars growing. This demonstrated creativity, independence and sustained engagement.

Language, literacy and numeracy were strongly promoted throughout the environment. Books, mark-making materials and games were readily available, supporting children's emerging skills. The childminder modelled rich language during play, such as discussing colours and sizes while exploring tractors in a floor book. Mathematical concepts were embedded naturally, with recent learning around size, evident when a child confidently described a tractor as "big" and "huge." These experiences supported early communication and numeracy development in meaningful and age-appropriate ways.

The childminder's interactions effectively extended children's learning. They used commenting, modelling and narration to support understanding, such as describing actions when children scooped, stirred and poured in the mud kitchen. When another child joined with a digger, the childminder encouraged problem solving by introducing herbs to scoop, prompting experimentation. These responsive interactions supported curiosity, problem solving and deeper exploration.

Planning was intentional and responsive to children's interests, seasons and real-life experiences. For example, a strong interest in tractors led to an outing, which the child later proudly shared. Older children were offered appropriate challenge, including learning to knit. Planning remained flexible, supported by a photo-based floor book that children enjoyed revisiting and discussing. Although mind maps had been trialled, children were less engaged with them, showing reflective evaluation of planning approaches.

The childminder used the Connect App to share learning updates with families, which parents valued. Developmental trackers supported six-monthly reviews and included children's mark-making. The childminder identified improving how observations were shared as an area for development and was trialling the Leuven Scale. Individual next steps were clearly displayed on 'high fives', which children confidently identified. Overall, the childminder demonstrated effective and improving approaches to assessment, supporting children's progress and positive partnerships with families.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

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**.

The childminder was consistently warm, nurturing and responsive in their interactions with children, creating a calm and emotionally supportive environment. Children felt confident to express their needs and interests, showing that they felt listened to and valued. The childminder responded promptly and sensitively, supporting children to feel secure throughout the day. For example, children confidently pointed to the caterpillars when they wanted a closer look and asked for help with zips on their jackets. Emotional development was further supported through resources such as feelings faces displayed at children's level, encouraging children to recognise and talk about emotions. These interactions demonstrated that children's emotional wellbeing was very well supported.

Strong, trusting relationships between the childminder and children were clearly evident. Children regularly sought reassurance, shared enjoyment and invited the childminder into their play, reflecting secure attachments. The childminder was emotionally available and responsive, supporting children to feel safe and confident. Positive peer relationships were also well established, with children demonstrating empathy and kindness towards one another. For example, when a child became upset, another child comforted them with a hug and said, "I love you." These genuine interactions supported children's emotional wellbeing and social development.

Transitions throughout the day were calm and well managed, supporting children to feel secure and confident. The childminder used clear, reassuring explanations to help children understand what would happen next. Routines were predictable and consistent, enabling children to manage transitions smoothly. Children were encouraged to take responsibility and develop independence through familiar routines. For example, children confidently tidied up before moving on and followed daily routines such as washing hands, turning the timer, switching off lights and placing flannels in the washing machine. Routines and transitions were very well embedded and promoted children's independence and sense of safety.

Safeguarding systems were robust and well understood by the childminder. Although no children were currently receiving medication, clear procedures and accurate records from previous administrations were in place. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed to ensure a safe environment. The childminder demonstrated strong child protection knowledge, including effective use of chronologies. Accident and incident records were completed through the Connect App and shared promptly with parents, including immediate communication regarding head bumps. Safeguarding, risk management and record keeping systems effectively supported children's safety and wellbeing.

Mealtimes were relaxed, sociable and unhurried, providing positive opportunities to support language development and independence. The childminder sat with children, offered choices and provided nutritious, home-cooked snacks. Parents reported that children were encouraged to try new foods, supported by guidance from Setting the Table. Children were supported to develop independence through age-appropriate tasks. For example, children helped to chop apples with sensitive support, and water bottles were freely accessible throughout the day. Mealtimes promoted healthy eating habits, independence and positive social experiences.

Personal plans were developed collaboratively with families and clearly outlined children's needs, next steps, and targeted supports, such as for speech and language development. We discussed refining the format to make reviews clearer using wellbeing indicators. Overall, personal planning was effective and individualised, supporting children's wellbeing.

The childminder knew the children very well and fostered strong, trusting relationships with families, welcoming parents into the setting and maintaining positive links with nurseries and schools to support continuity of care. Parents told us they felt welcomed and had a positive relationship with the childminder. One parent shared, "I think [the childminder] is a great childminder who treats the children fairly and kindly. We have had a great relationship with [them]." Another parent told us, "I believe that we have built a very strong relationship based on mutual respect, honesty and transparency. [The childminder] goes over and above to support us as a family with any difficulties [my child] may be experiencing." These strong, respectful partnerships ensured families felt supported and contributed to high quality, consistent care for children.

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

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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