

Claire Small Child Minding

Saltcoats

Type of inspection:
Announced

Completed on:
25 March 2026

Service provided by:
Claire Small

Service provider number:
SP2008968043

Service no:
CS2008168113

About the service

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

The service is located within a residential area of Saltcoats, North Ayrshire. Areas of the home used for childminding include a downstairs toilet, kitchen, dedicated playroom and an enclosed garden, as well as the upstairs living room. The childminder's home is well situated and benefits from close proximity to local amenities, including schools, nurseries, shops, the seaside and local parks.

About the inspection

This was an announced inspection which took place on 25 March 2026 between 13:00 and 14:45. 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 Microsoft Forms questionnaires
- 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within leadership.

Key messages

- The childminder demonstrated a clear vision and child-centred ethos, with reflective practice beginning to inform improvements.
- Self-evaluation was developing, with further work needed to measure impact and strengthen the improvement cycle.
- Children experienced well-planned, engaging play opportunities that supported learning, creativity and sustained engagement.
- Experiences were inclusive and responsive to children's ages and interests, resulting in positive learning outcomes.
- Children benefited from warm, nurturing relationships that supported their wellbeing, confidence and emotional security.
- Assessment processes and partnerships with families supported children's progress and helped promote continuity in care.

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	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 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.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The childminder's vision to provide a clean, happy environment was evident in daily practice. This vision informed decisions and interactions, resulting in well-planned, responsive care. A clear child-centred ethos underpinned practice and guided support for children's learning and development. As a result, children experienced positive relationships and appropriate support for their development and progression.

Children's views were gathered through conversations and observations. This provided meaningful insight into their preferences and informed ongoing adjustments to routines, care and play experiences.

Self-evaluation and reflection were developing within the service at the time of inspection. The childminder had begun using the Quality Improvement Framework and key questions to support reflective practice. This supported identification of strengths and areas requiring further development. Wall displays had been refreshed to reflect children's achievements and learning. During the inspection, children confidently shared and discussed their work with the inspector. This demonstrated children's pride in their achievements and supported a strong sense of belonging.

The childminder had planned further approaches to gather children's views and strengthen evaluation. This included the planned use of child-friendly questionnaires to capture children's preferences and experiences. Open-ended and heuristic play opportunities had also been planned to further support exploration and child-led learning.

Self-evaluation focused mainly on identifying actions rather than measuring their impact on outcomes. The childminder recognised the need to strengthen evaluation of how changes improved children's experiences. There were opportunities to use evidence more consistently to inform next steps for improvement. This included linking observations, children's views and reflections more clearly to improvement planning. The Quality Improvement Framework could support a more robust improvement cycle, strengthening planning, implementation, review and evaluation of improvements. Developing this approach further could support sustained improvements in children's experiences and outcomes.

The childminder described plans to develop the enclosed rear garden to enhance outdoor play opportunities for children. At present, children accessed outdoor experiences through regular use of the local community. Planned improvements were also identified for the staircase within the hallway to further strengthen safety. The childminder had submitted the relevant notifications for the planned works. Risk assessments were in place to manage potential hazards and ensure children's safety while planned works were progressed.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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.

Playing, learning and developing

The childminder provided a stimulating environment that effectively supported children's play, learning and development. Care was provided for children attending early learning and childcare alongside school-aged children before and after school. A wide range of age-appropriate resources supported literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and imaginative role-play across different age groups. Resources were regularly rotated with children's input, sustaining interest, curiosity and prolonged engagement in play. As a result, children remained motivated and actively involved in their learning.

Play spaces were thoughtfully planned to reflect the individual ages, stages and interests of all children attending. Experiences were inclusive, varied and developmentally appropriate for both younger and older children. Planning was informed by the childminder's professional experience and the GIRFEC SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. Children's experiences and activities were recorded in floor books, supporting reflection, continuity and progression in learning. Children's achievements were displayed within the playroom, promoting a sense of belonging and demonstrating that children and their learning were valued. Children accessed appropriately challenging experiences that developed creativity, problem-solving skills and positive social interactions. As a result, children developed confidence, independence and important early learning and life skills through purposeful play.

The childminder extended learning beyond the home environment through carefully planned outings. Visits to toddler groups and local play parks supported younger children's learning and social development. These experiences strengthened relationships and helped children develop a sense of belonging within their community. As a result, younger children developed communication skills, environmental awareness and positive social behaviours.

Evidence showed that school-aged children attended the service during out-of-school hours. This was confirmed through returned family questionnaires, wall displays and professional discussion during the inspection. School-aged children engaged positively with younger children during shared indoor play experiences. These interactions supported nurturing behaviours, cooperation and positive relationships across age groups. As a result, school-aged children developed empathy, social responsibility and confidence through meaningful interactions.

The childminder shared children's learning and experiences with families through regular observations and assessments. Learning records demonstrated clear evidence of children's learning and progression over time. Observations were linked to relevant curriculum guidance and early learning and childcare frameworks. This supported effective identification of learning targets within health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Assessment was strengthened through clear next steps, supporting progression for children across different age groups. Positive relationships with children and families, including sharing learning from home, supported continuity and consistency between home and the setting.

Families reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of experiences provided. They stated their children were happy, well supported and benefiting from a wide range of activities. Families valued the balance of care provided for early years and school-aged children. They felt confident their children experienced a nurturing, supportive and engaging learning environment.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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.

Nurturing care and support

The childminder provided a warm, nurturing and responsive environment where children's wellbeing and safety were consistently prioritised. Children appeared relaxed, confident and settled, demonstrating that they felt safe and secure in the care provided. Strong, positive relationships were evident throughout the inspection. The childminder interacted with children in a respectful, caring and responsive manner at all times. They demonstrated a strong understanding of each child's individual needs, routines and preferences. Children sought reassurance, comfort and interaction confidently, indicating trusting and secure attachments. As a result, children experienced emotionally supportive care that promoted their wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Feedback from parents was consistently positive and reinforced inspection findings. Parents described the childminder as kind, approachable and having a lovely manner. They expressed high levels of confidence in the care provided for their children. Parents felt comfortable discussing their child's needs and raising questions or concerns. This strengthened partnership working and supported consistent approaches to care between home and the setting.

Policies and risk assessments were reviewed and updated in line with national guidance. These were shared with families at enrolment and when updates occurred. Families reported feeling well informed about safety procedures and expectations. As a result, parents felt reassured that their children's health, safety and wellbeing were well protected.

The home environment was well-organised and thoughtfully arranged to support children's care and learning. Clearly defined areas supported play, rest and mealtimes effectively. Children accessed resources easily, promoting independence and confident decision-making. Daily routines were well-planned and provided children with a sense of stability and predictability.

Mealtimes were calm, positive experiences that encouraged social interaction and independence. Meals provided were nutritious, well-balanced and aligned with Setting the Table guidance. Children were meaningfully involved in meal planning and confidently expressed their preferences. As a result, children developed healthy attitudes towards food and felt included in everyday decisions.

Personal plans were well structured around the GIRFEC SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. They reflected children's individual strengths, interests and identified support needs. Information recorded was clear, relevant and meaningful. Plans were shared and reviewed regularly with parents. Parents confirmed they were involved in discussions about their child's wellbeing and progress. This supported a shared understanding of next steps and priorities. As a result, personal plans were current and effective in supporting children's wellbeing, development and learning.

Overall, the childminder demonstrated a very good level of practice. Children experienced high-quality care characterised by warm relationships, consistent routines and personalised support. Effective partnership working and reflective practice contributed to positive outcomes. As a result, children's wellbeing, confidence and development were very well supported.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The childminder should ensure individual personal plans are consistently in place for all children within 28 days of the child starting in the service. These plans should reflect children's individual health, welfare and safety needs and be reviewed with parents when required, or at least once in every six month period.

This is to ensure that Care and Support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state:

'My personal 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

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2018.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for all children within required timescales and reflected individual needs. Parents were involved in reviews, ensuring information remained current and supported positive wellbeing outcomes for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The childminder should access training, e learning or self-study to further develop her skills and knowledge to support her practice as a childminder.

This is to ensure that Management is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their organisational codes'. HSCS 3.14

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2018.

Action taken since then

The childminder had taken appropriate steps to strengthen their professional knowledge and skills. They had accessed relevant training and guidance, demonstrating improved confidence and understanding of key practice areas. As a result, their practice was informed by current guidance and supported positive outcomes for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

The childminder should maintain a record of children's attendance to show the total number of children in the childminder's home at any one time.

This is to ensure that Management is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state:

'I use a service and organisation that is well led and managed'. HSCS 4.23

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2018.

Action taken since then

Attendance records were maintained and accurately reflected children's varying patterns of attendance. This supported the childminder to operate within the conditions of registration and ensured children's safety and wellbeing were effectively monitored.

This area for improvement has been met.

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	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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