

Elaine Duncan Child Minding

Darvel

Type of inspection:
Announced

Completed on:
18 March 2026

Service provided by:
Elaine Duncan

Service provider number:
SP2003901783

Service no:
CS2003003479

About the service

The childminder is registered to provide a service for a maximum of 6 children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom a maximum of 6 will be under 12, of whom no more than 6 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 2 are under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminders family.

The childminder provides her childminding service from her home, which is located in a residential area of the town of Darvel in East Ayrshire. The accommodation used for childminding is on one level and comprises of a comfortable playroom, a kitchen with a dining area, a bathroom and a fully enclosed back garden.

The childminder aims to: "Provide a reliable childcare service within a warm, clean and smoke free environment." and "Provide a fun and caring service for children to learn and develop in a safe and friendly environment."

About the inspection

This was an announced inspection which took place on 18 March 2026. The inspection was carried out by an 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 children using the service
- 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

- Open, trusting partnerships with parents are a key strength. Families feel confident to share their views, and feedback is very positive about the safe, welcoming and nurturing environment.
- Children were relaxed, secure and confident in the childminder's care, moving freely around the environment and independently choosing toys and resources.
- The childminder knew the children very well and used information alongside her own observations to meet their individual needs consistently and effectively.
- The childminder demonstrated a caring and responsive approach, building strong, trusting relationships. She knew the children very well and responded to them sensitively, helping them to feel safe, valued and secure.

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

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.

A clear statement of the childminder's vision, values and aims was included within the policies folder and shared with parents. This helped families understand what the service offered and what they could expect for their children. The childminder regularly reviewed this statement and will continue to involve parents and children as much as possible to ensure that it reflects the views, experiences and aspirations of those who use the service.

The childminder was a reflective practitioner who thought carefully about the quality of her service and how it impacted on children. She regularly reviewed her practice and made improvements in response to children's changing needs. For example, mealtimes had been reviewed and adapted to better meet children's developmental stages and preferences, ensuring that these experiences remained positive, relaxed and supportive. Whilst the childminder reflected well on children's experiences and responded to their needs and interests, her evaluations were more informal and responsive. To strengthen this further, we have suggested that the childminder will find the Care Inspectorate self-evaluation framework will help her to focus her reflections and identify improvements in a more planned and proactive way.

Strong, open and trusting relationships had been developed with parents. Families felt confident approaching the childminder to share their views, ask questions or raise concerns. Parents and children were regularly consulted, both informally through daily conversations and more formally by questionnaire. Feedback from parents was very positive, with one parent commenting that the childminder "provides a very safe, welcoming and nurturing environment, knows the children and families really well and ensures that all needs are met".

The childminder's home was well organised, welcoming and very well maintained. Clear systems were in place to ensure that the environment remained safe, clean and suitable for children at all times. This helped children to feel secure and confident, and supported them to play, learn and relax comfortably throughout the day.

The childminder is a member of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and makes very good use of their training, guidance and resources. She actively engaged in professional development opportunities and reflected on how learning would improve her practice. Training undertaken included Child Protection, First Aid and child development. This ongoing learning ensured that children were cared for safely and that practice will continue to improve and develop.

Children play and learn 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.

During our visit, the very young child present was clearly confident, settled and secure in the care of the childminder. The child moved freely and confidently around the childminding areas, independently choosing toys and resources. This demonstrated that the environment was familiar, welcoming and well organised, helping children to feel safe and relaxed.

The childminder knew the child very well. She used information shared by parents, alongside her own observations, to ensure that the child's individual needs were met consistently and effectively. This strong understanding helped the child to feel supported and nurtured throughout the day.

All children had their own folder, containing photographs and observations that clearly showed their development over time. These records helped tell the story of each child's experiences with the childminder. Observations were often used to identify the next steps, ensuring that activities and experiences were planned around children's interests and developmental needs.

Children's literacy and language development was well supported. There was a good selection of books, and we saw that the child clearly enjoyed sharing stories. The childminder spoke warmly and naturally with the child, helping to build vocabulary, listening skills and confidence in communication. Numeracy skills were supported in everyday activities, such as counting before rolling cars and through baking experiences. These meaningful and practical opportunities helped children to develop early mathematical understanding in a fun and natural way.

Children were encouraged to be curious and independent. For example, they explored books with lift-the-flaps and were supported to try things for themselves. Role-play activities, such as dressing up and play with the toy kitchen, helped children make sense of the world around them and develop practical skills like pouring and turn-taking. Board games were available, encouraging children to share, cooperate and learn about rules. Children's physical development was also well supported through activities such as playdough and craft experiences.

School-aged children were well supported before and after school. They were able to choose whether they wanted to relax or take part in more active play, helping them to unwind and feel settled after their school day. A range of appropriate games and activities were available to meet their needs.

Children had regular opportunities to play outdoors in the childminder's garden, where a variety of larger equipment, such as bikes, supported physical development and active play. Children also went on regular outings into the local community, including visits to toddler groups, nearby woods and the park.

The childminder demonstrated a clear understanding of how to support children's learning and development. Toys and resources were chosen to match children's ages, developmental stages and individual interests. To enhance this further, we suggested that additional learning about schematic play would support the childminder in meeting the developmental needs of younger children even more

effectively.

Parents were well informed about their child's day and progress. They received daily updates through conversations at drop-off and collection times, as well as through online apps. This was supported by termly newsletters and regular reviews of children's learning and care.

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.

The childminder demonstrated a warm, caring and nurturing approach which supported the development of trusting relationships with children and their families. She knew the child very well and was tuned into their individual needs, emotions and moods. She responded sensitively when the child was tired and needed comfort, by offering reassurance and cuddles. This helped the child to feel safe, valued and secure.

Discussion showed that partnership working with parents was a clear strength. Parents were very welcome in the childminder's home and encouraged to share information about their child. Transitions were well supported, both within daily routines and when children moved between settings, such as home and other care or learning environments. The childminder communicated regularly through daily conversations, text messages and online apps. This open communication helped to ensure that children's care was consistent and met their individual needs.

All children had personal care plans containing the required information. These included strategies and planned next steps. The childminder was confident in explaining how she met each child's needs and how working closely with parents supported continuity of care. Care plans were developed and reviewed in partnership with parents, ensuring the childminder had the information she needed to support children effectively.

Healthy eating was promoted. While parents provided most meals, the childminder offered a range of healthy snacks. We observed that mealtimes were sociable and relaxed, and the childminder often modelled positive eating habits, helping children to develop a healthy relationship with food.

Appropriate medication procedures were in place, although no children required medication at the time of the inspection. Effective infection prevention and control practices supported children's health and wellbeing. Children were familiar with routines such as handwashing before meals and were also developing important social skills, including sharing and taking turns.

The childminder demonstrated a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities in keeping children safe. Risk assessments were in place for all children, and she was familiar with current guidance, including preventing choking and safe sleep practices. These measures helped ensure a safe and secure environment where children could confidently explore and play.

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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