

Harlequins Child Minding

Ellon

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 April 2026

Service provided by:
Kirsty Liddle

Service provider number:
SP2016988424

Service no:
CS2016350572

About the service

Harlequins is a childminding service which is registered to provide care to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16. There should be no more than six under the age of 12 years old and no more than three not yet attending primary school. There should be no more than one child under 12 months old. This includes children in the childminder's household. There were four minded children present during the inspection. They were all school aged children.

The service is provided from the childminder's home in a rural area of Aberdeenshire. Children have regular access to the playroom, dining kitchen and bathroom downstairs. The living room is available for quieter activities or rest. Children also have access to a large garden area to provide opportunities for outdoor play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 April 2026 between the times of 13:30 and 18:00. 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:

- spent time with children using the service and spoke to one of their parents/carers
- received three completed questionnaires from parents/carers
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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

- The childminder demonstrated reflective leadership, with clear aims and appropriate engagement with children and families supporting positive experiences.
- Improvement planning was underway, though clearer evaluation of impact and feedback links is needed to support sustained improvement.
- Children were confident and engaged, leading their own play through access to appropriate resources and supportive, responsive interactions.
- Learning experiences were purposeful, though further use of shared thinking and personalised goals would help extend challenge and progression.
- Children experienced warm, consistent and responsive care, which supported their wellbeing, confidence and emotional security.
- Strong relationships and predictable routines helped children feel safe, respected and well supported in the childminder's 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	4 - 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

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The childminder shared a statement of their aims and objectives with parents. Supporting them to know what to expect from the service. These aims were reviewed regularly, and any changes were communicated effectively. This demonstrated a commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. We discussed the benefit of fully involving families in these reviews to strengthen how well the aims reflect parents' aspirations for their children.

The aims were appropriately linked to the wellbeing indicators of safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected and responsible. They also highlighted the provision of a safe, nurturing and welcoming environment for school aged children. We saw these values reflected in practice, which positively impacted on children's wellbeing, confidence and sense of security.

The childminder demonstrated a reflective approach to leadership and improvement. They had begun to use the 'Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Sectors' to evaluate their service and appropriately identified areas for development. These included improving mealtime experiences to reduce waste and strengthening approaches to gathering children's views on new resources. This showed a willingness to improve practice, based on national guidance.

Parents all agreed that they and their children were meaningfully involved in the development of the service. However, it was not always clear how this feedback informed evaluation and improvement planning. We discussed the importance of demonstrating clearer links between feedback and planned changes to further strengthen leadership practice.

Children's views were sought regularly and acted upon, supporting them to feel respected and listened to. For example, children expressed an interest in playing basketball, and the childminder responded by supporting access to appropriate facilities. The childminder also adapted resources and the use of space as children's needs changed, demonstrating responsive and child centred leadership.

While some planned improvements had been implemented, others remained ongoing. The childminder should now further develop how they evaluate the impact of improvements on children's experiences and outcomes. This will support sustained improvement and help identify and address any barriers to progress.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were confident and engaged in the childminder's care. The childminder had a good understanding of children's abilities and interests, which supported them to plan activities that promoted engagement.

Children accessed spaces and resources independently, enabling them to lead their own play and make choices about how and where they played. For example, during the inspection some children chose outdoor play while others selected activities in the playroom.

A suitable range of resources was available to support the development of skills in language, literacy and numeracy. These included board games, craft and baking activities, and discussions with peers and the childminder. During the inspection, children participated in an egg hunt which was planned by the childminder but led by the children. They took turns, negotiated roles and discussed quantities, supporting learning through play.

The childminder gave children time and space to make decisions and express their views. They recognised when children required additional support and provided this sensitively, which helped to build confidence and self-esteem. Interactions were caring and supportive. To further enhance learning, the childminder should now develop the use of shared thinking, including wondering aloud and age-appropriate questioning and commenting, to extend children's understanding and curiosity.

All children currently attending the service were school aged. We discussed how involving children in setting personal learning or skill-based goals could provide greater challenge for some children and help to support progress and achievement.

Parents and children spoke positively about outings and access to local facilities, particularly during school holidays. These experiences, including baking, crafting activities and trips to beaches and local events, helped to broaden children's experiences.

The childminder involved children in planning activities, outings and the purchase of new resources. Tools such as mind maps were used to capture children's ideas and preferences. For example, children had noted what they would like to do and suggested, pizza nights, painting, football. We discussed how using this approach to identify individual goals and linking the suggested activities to these could further strengthen planning and support progression.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The childminder demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of nurturing relationships to support children's growth and development. Children experienced warm, consistent and responsive care, which promoted their confidence, wellbeing and sense of security.

Children were settled and confident within the childminder's home environment. Most children had been attending the service for several years and were familiar with daily routines, which supported continuity and emotional security. Transitions from school were well managed. Children were given time to play in the park before returning home, which supported positive relationships with peers and helped children settle into the childminder's care.

Children's privacy and dignity were consistently respected. Support was provided discreetly and sensitively when required, and children were able to choose quiet time either independently or in small groups. This

supported children to regulate their emotions and develop social skills.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed and sociable. Children were involved in planning and preparing snacks and meals, which promoted independence and positive attitudes to food. The childminder was reviewing mealtime arrangements and self-serving approaches to enhance children's experiences and reduce food waste. The childminder sat with the children and used mealtimes as opportunities for discussion, including conversations about healthy choices.

Consistent routines helped children feel safe and secure. Although no children currently required medication, appropriate policies and procedures were in place to support safe practice.

Personal plans were in place for each child and contained information to support their safety and health. The childminder knew children very well and demonstrated detailed knowledge of their interests, preferences and support needs. We discussed the importance of further developing personal plans to reflect this knowledge to strengthen information sharing and evaluation of support.

Key information was shared to support continuity of care for children. This included details of home routines and changing preferences and interests. The childminder was flexible to meet children's changing needs enabling children to feel safe and secure with any changes.

Strong relationships were in place with families. Parents reported positive, trusting relationships with the childminder, supported by open communication and shared expectations. They felt involved in their child's care and welcomed into the service. This contributed to consistency for children between home and the service and supported positive outcomes.

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

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