

Smith, Hazel Child Minding

Shetland

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 May 2025

Service provided by:
Hazel Smith

Service provider number:
SP2003905114

Service no:
CS2003009549

About the service

Hazel Smith childminding is registered to provide a service to a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

The service is situated in the settlement of Quendale in the south-west area of Dunrossness in Shetland. Children have access to the living room, kitchen/dining area and bathroom. There is ample parking for parents and a large front garden for the children to play outdoors.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 1 May 2025 between 09:15 and 12:45. 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 children using the service
- received three responses to our request for feedback from parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and experiences for children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families well.
- Children experienced warm and caring interactions from the childminder.
- Children were cared for in a clean and comfortable environment.
- The childminder should develop quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation to support continual development and improvement of the service.
- Children would benefit from the childminder participating in training, to update and develop their knowledge and understanding of best practice.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefited from kind, caring and nurturing interactions with the childminder. Reassurance and cuddles were given and the childminder was sensitive and responsive to children's needs. This helped children to feel safe, loved and cared for.

Children and families experienced a friendly and welcoming service. The childminder worked well with families and had known some over the course of many years. These positive relationships helped the childminder get to know the children's personalities well and to create bonding relationships. This helped children to feel nurtured and respected. A child commented, "I love Hazel." Parents described the childminder as, "caring and kind" and one parent commented, "It's a home from home. The bairns are so happy."

Personal care was respectful, and children were asked if they needed help at the toilet. Children were in the early stages of learning how to go to the toilet and this was done sensitively and respectfully. We observed lots of praise, reassurance and encouragement as children were learning this new skill.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the childminder's knowledge and understanding of the children. Since the previous inspection, the childminder had developed personal plans using information provided by parents. These had been recently updated which contributed to a consistent approach to care and support. One parent commented, "[The childminder] knows my child in great depth and understands their likes and dislikes."

Children experienced mealtimes that were relaxed and unhurried, around a table in the dining area. All meals were provided by parents and the childminder ensured foods were appropriately prepared. The childminder sat with the children promoting their safety and encouraging their communication and language skills through discussions which were led by the children. Children were offered water to drink, ensuring they were kept hydrated and well.

A travel cot was available for younger children who needed to sleep. Sleep routines were child led and influenced by their home routine. This reflected parents' wishes and supported children's health. We advised the childminder to implement a safe sleep policy in line with guidance, further supporting children to be safe.

Children were protected from harm by the childminder's knowledge and understanding of their role in identifying, recording and referring any concerns. There was a child protection policy in place which supported the childminder to carry out their role.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and explored a variety of toys and materials to support their learning and development. Children took part in imaginative play and had fun re-enacting a recent trip to the swimming pool and cooking in the play kitchen. This supported their learning through familiar and real situations.

The childminder helped children to play together, learn and respect each other. The childminder modelled good listening and talking skills by getting down to the children's level. They encouraged them to share toys, take turns and care for one another. This supported children's cooperative play and communication. One parent told us, "[The childminder] is outstanding in her ability to develop social skills and empathy in the children. My child is able to share and consider others very well as a result."

Children benefited from some experiences that supported the development of their skills in literacy and numeracy. For example, the children enjoyed joining in with songs and rhymes throughout the day. This supported them to develop their language skills and confidence. Numeracy skills were promoted by counting and identifying colours and shapes during play.

Children and families benefited from the information the childminder shared about their day and their progress. Parents told us that they valued the sharing of photographs and videos, which enabled them to celebrate their child's successes and achievements. A parent commented, "[The childminder] communicates feedback on milestones in a timely way."

Children's experiences were enriched through regular opportunities to play and learn in the community. Children regularly went on nature walks, visited the farm animals and local play park. A child told us, "I feed the peerie lambs. His Mommy had no milk and we help her get more milk." Parents and carers talked positively about this aspect of the service. One parent commented "I am very impressed at how [the childminder] integrates their local Croft as part of the curriculum." These visits helped to enhance children's learning and encouraged them to make positive connections with their local community.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Children benefited from being cared for in a clean, comfortable and well-furnished environment. They played in the kitchen/dining area, living room and hallway, where they had room to move around and explore. Comfortable sofas provided a place to rest and relax and the dining table provided a space for play and meals. This meant children had plenty space for their needs.

Toys and resources were easily accessible supporting children to make choices about their play and learning. There was a variety of resources available to the children which reflected their interests. These included a play kitchen, small world farm, animals, vehicles, books and games. Resources were clean, in good condition and appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Children were cared for in a clean and tidy environment. Children were well supported to wash hands at key times such as before eating and after toileting. They were provided with individual hand towels to help prevent illness through cross-contamination.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through regular access to the outdoors. A large garden provided opportunities for outdoor play. Toys included a climbing frame, slide and ride on vehicles. The childminder told us children were included in planting and growing flowers and vegetables. Although not used during our visit, parents told us their children had the opportunity to play outdoors regularly. This contributed to children being fit and healthy.

The childminder spoke confidently about how they risk assessed informally and the mitigations that were put in place to keep children safe. For example, the childminder's dogs were kept in a separate area when minded children were present. The childminder completed visual checks each day to ensure resources and areas used by children indoors and outdoors were well-maintained. The childminder did not record risk assessments and we encouraged them to consider this to help ensure all areas are fully assessed and their good practice in keeping children safe is reflected. This supported children's health and safety.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

The service aims, objectives and policies were shared with families when registering with the service. These included, 'To provide a safe and secure environment for children.' Sharing the aims, objectives and policies enabled parents to know what to expect from the service and supported a continuity of care.

The childminder had reflected on practice and experiences within their service and had spoken with children and parents to gather their views. The childminder discussed some ongoing improvement which included the development of children's personal plans and play resources. We spoke with the childminder about the benefits of a concise improvement plan and recording changes as they occurred to support the process of self-evaluation. These changes could be as a result of seeking the views of children and parents, learning from training that informs practice and implementing best practice guidance. We discussed the benefits of using quality audit tools such as - A quality framework for day-care of children, childminding and school-aged childcare - in order to support self-evaluation. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (see area for improvement 2 in the section of this report - What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection.

Policies and procedures were in place which underpinned the service. However, some of these required updating to reflect current legislation and best practice guidance. Regular reviews and updates of policy and procedure would help ensure children access a quality service and experience care that is right for them.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Children experienced kind and caring interactions during their time in the service which enabled them to feel safe and secure in their care. Children felt valued as the childminder listened to them and acted on their requests. Parents told us they had a positive relationship with the childminder. One commented, "I feel very welcome at [the childminder's]. I see them as an extension of our own family."

The childminder had many years of childcare experience. They did not, however, keep up-to-date with current guidance to support their practice. The childminder had no recent training in place and should now access first aid, child protection and food hygiene training as a priority. We discussed the importance of this in providing high quality experiences for children. The childminder advised they would take the necessary action. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (see area for improvement 3 in the section of this report - What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection.)

The childminder had some links with another local childminder and continuing these connections could increase professional support. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate Hub, where they will find supporting guidance and encouraged them to make use of organisations such as the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) for support. This would support the ongoing development of their service.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 2 July 2024, the provider must adhere to the conditions of registration, to ensure the safe provision of care.

This is to comply with regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1:19)

This requirement was made on 29 May 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The childminder had taken appropriate action to ensure that the conditions of their registration were adhered to and that the numbers of children attending did not exceed the number stated on the certificate.

Met - within timescales

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

To support children's health and wellbeing, the childminder should ensure all children have a personal plan that meets their individual needs, choices and progress. This information should be used by the childminder to care for and support children effectively. Plans should be reviewed by parents at least every six months to ensure the information remains up-to-date and relevant.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care 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).

Supporting guidance can be found in the Guide for Providers on Personal Planning - Early Learning and Childcare on the Care Inspectorate Hub.

This area for improvement was made on 29 May 2024.

Action taken since then

Since the previous inspection, the childminder had developed personal plans using information provided by parents. These had been recently reviewed and updated with parents which contributed to a consistent approach to care and support.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

In order to improve outcomes for children, the childminder should embed a culture of self-evaluation and quality assurance to ensure improved outcomes for children. Parents and children should be included in the process.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes" (HSCS 4.19).

Supporting guidance includes: A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare, Your Childminding Journey, My Childminding Experience Care Inspectorate - self-evaluation for improvement.

This area for improvement was made on 29 May 2024.

Action taken since then

Self-evaluation to improve the service was in the very early stages. Children and families had some opportunities to discuss the service and make suggestions for improvements. We discussed with the childminder using best practice guidance, such as the quality framework, in order to reflect more formally on the service.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's health and wellbeing and to develop children's play and learning experiences, the childminder should undertake reading, training and self-study appropriate to their role. The childminder should reflect on their learning and record how this influences the children in their care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 29 May 2024.

Action taken since then

Since the previous inspection, the childminder had not accessed any training or relevant reading. The childminder had no recent training in place and should now access first aid, child protection and food hygiene training as a priority. The childminder agreed to take the necessary action.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	3 - Adequate

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