

Milne, Denise Child Minding

Westhill

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 June 2025

Service provided by:
Denise Milne

Service provider number:
SP2014985743

Service no:
CS2014324257

About the service

Denise Milne provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area in Westhill, Aberdeenshire. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of seven children at any one time up to 16 years of age. Overnight care is not provided.

The service is close to parks, the local primary school, and other amenities. Children have access to the open-plan kitchen and playroom, lounge, and a fully enclosed garden.

At the time of our inspection, nine children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 June 2025 between 08:10 and 09:15 and between 13:40 and 17:00. 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 children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and confident in the childminder's care.
- Children benefitted from daily access to outdoors and made good use of their local community.
- Regular communication with families provided continuity of care.
- Children had freedom to lead their own play.
- Personal plans should be reviewed to ensure they hold up-to-date and relevant information.
- Children benefitted from a wide range of play experiences.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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 different parts of this key question as **good** and **very good**, with an overall grade of **good**. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and their families experienced a service which was welcoming and friendly. This helped to build positive relationships between the childminder and families. Parents felt connected to the childminder and described them as "genuinely caring and understanding". One parent commented, "[The childminder] is an extra mum away from home to my little one. [They] provide a welcoming, safe, and engaging environment". Another shared, "[The childminder] immediately makes you feel at ease and like you've known [them] forever". This supported positive relationships and communication.

Children were happy and relaxed in the childminder's care. Children's cues were recognised by the childminder and they responded in a caring and kind manner. Children described the childminder as "very nice" with one commenting, "My favourite thing is that I can talk to [them] about anything". Children receiving nurturing care supported them to feel safe and secure.

Overall, children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's knowledge of their individual needs. Personal plans were in place for each child and the childminder was knowledgeable of their individual needs. The childminder had gathered information about children's health, preferences, and routines when they started, through collaboration with families. However, some personal plans had not been recently updated to reflect children's current needs which meant there was potential for some information to be missed. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate's personal planning guidance and discussed the benefits of involving children in this process, where suitable (see area for improvement 1).

Mealtimes were relaxed and unhurried for children. Children were consulted and had made snack suggestions on a whiteboard, which the childminder used to plan the snack menu. On collection from school, children were given the choice of where they would like to have snack. They chose a picnic at the park and the childminder was flexible in facilitating this. Children enjoyed a nutritious and relaxed snack together. The childminder sat with children, encouraging a sociable and safe snack experience.

Effective medication systems helped keep children safe. Whilst no children currently needed medication administered, paperwork was in place should it be required. A policy supported the childminder's understanding and practice and promoted parents' awareness of their process.

The childminder was knowledgeable in their approach to keeping children safe. They confidently spoke about procedures which were in place to protect children, such as having a consistent pick-up spot at school. For some children, significant events in their lives had been noted. We discussed the benefits of ensuring this was in place for all children and any follow up actions were recorded in their chronology. This would further support children's safety and wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefitted from a range of experiences which were suited to their ages and stages of development. They were able to independently make choices about their play and access resources in line with their interests. On the day of inspection, children spent time indoors building with Lego and role playing, as well

as climbing and running outdoors. The childminder was very flexible in their approach, giving children the opportunity to decide where and what they played with. This meant that children had freedom to lead their own play.

Parents told us that their child's development was supported through interesting play experiences. One parent commented that the childminder "provides a wide range of engaging adventures" and another shared that their child benefitted from a "range of activities". This meant that children were involved in play that was meaningful to them.

Children experienced a balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences. They wrote their suggestions on a whiteboard and the childminder involved the children in planning for these. For example, one child had suggested a spa day and enthusiastically shared the plans for this. Children spoke positively about previous planned activities they had taken part in, such as magic shows and den building. As a result, children were happy and engaged.

Children benefitted from experiences that supported their language, literacy, and numeracy skills. For example, they enjoyed completing a timed obstacle course and comparing scores and taking part in different conversations. The childminder used opportunities to extend children's learning and vocabulary, such as counting the number of Lego pieces used to build the model. Children were also able to access a range of books and craft materials. This meant that children were supported to reach their full potential.

The childminder recognised children's individual achievements. Parents were kept informed of their child's progress through photo messages and face-to-face discussions. A parent commented, "Achievements are always acknowledged and recognised" by the childminder. Another advised, "There is open communication about what's going on in my child's life". This meant parents felt valued and included in their children's play and learning experiences.

Children had opportunities to reflect on their learning experiences through a photo book. Experiences were recorded next to different wellbeing indicators to support children in understanding how their learning supported their wellbeing needs. We identified that children could have more ownership of this and could be involved in recording their thoughts and ideas within the folder. This would support the childminder in planning for children's learning.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their wider community. They were very familiar with the area and spaces that were available to them. Regular visits to parks and local green areas allowed children to take part in energetic play and develop their physical skills.

Areas for improvement

1. The childminder should review all personal plans with parents, and children where possible, at least every six months. This will ensure they hold the most up-to-date information about each child and can plan how children's needs will be met to support their health and wellbeing.

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); and 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were able to play and rest in a homely and welcoming environment. The open-plan kitchen and conservatory area provided ample space for children to play. They were also able to rest and relax on comfortable sofas. The childminder advised the lounge could also be used by children if they wanted to access a quieter space after a busy day at school. A child-sized table was available for children to use for playing and eating. Children's crafts and creations were displayed which helped them feel included and valued.

A variety of resources were offered to support children's play and learning. Toys and games were age-appropriate and included craft materials, construction kits, and small world figures. Children advised they liked playing with the toys together and they could ask if they wanted other resources which were not set out. The childminder described using some natural materials to enrich children's play experiences outdoors. This included open-ended resources such as ribbons, sticks, and stones. There was further scope to develop this indoors. We encouraged the childminder to consider children's access to a range of natural open-ended resources. This would enhance opportunities for children to be creative and imaginative.

Children's interests were actively promoted by the childminder. They had opportunities to continue and extend their current interests and the childminder recognised the importance of this. Children had recently been interested in building different models with Lego, such as mansions and airports. The childminder ensured these remained in built for the children the next time they attended, to continue their interest in this. This meant that children were engaged in meaningful play.

Risk assessments and safety checks for the childminder's home had been carried out. These identified potential risks and measures in place to promote a safe environment. The childminder encouraged children to consider hazards when walking home from school in an appropriate way, such as checking if it was safe before crossing the road. This supported children's understanding of keeping themselves safe.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted through effective infection and prevention control practices. They were supported to wash their hands at key points of the day, such as before eating and after using the toilet. We encouraged the childminder to consider having separate hand towels for children, to prevent cross-contamination. This would further support children to be safe and well.

The childminder protected children's personal information. All records were stored securely to ensure families' privacy and confidentiality.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as **very good**. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder had a clear vision for the service. They shared key information with families before children started, including aims and objectives, policies, and procedures. This helped families to understand what to expect from the service.

Children and their families valued opportunities to be involved in developing the service. One parent advised, "We provide feedback on activities, which is acted upon" and a child shared, "[The childminder] asks us about different things and listens to what we say". The childminder took time to speak to parents at the beginning and end of the day, as well as regularly shared key information about the service through messages. The childminder advised they were continuing to explore different methods of gathering feedback. This promoted working together to meaningfully develop the service.

Children benefitted from the childminder's commitment to self evaluation. They had started to self evaluate their service, identifying areas of strength and areas that could be further improved using 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare'. The childminder had a clear plan in place to action their improvement priorities, with realistic timescales. We discussed the benefits of recording the impact of developments on outcomes for children. This would support the continuous cycle of improvement through reflective practice.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge, and values

The childminder was kind and caring in their approach with children. They shared they had high aspirations for the children in their care and was passionate about working with families to support this. Parents valued the childminder's support and recognition of fun. One parent commented, "[The childminder] allows a free and safe space for children to show their personalities".

Children were supported by a childminder who understood their individual interests and stages of development. On collection from school, the childminder offered children a selection of toys and resources they had brought from home. This meant that all children were supported to take part in activities that were suitable for them. A child commented, "There's always things I like to do". Through their experience of providing a childminding service, the childminder was able to use their skills and knowledge to enhance outcomes for children.

Children benefitted from the childminder keeping their skills and knowledge up-to-date. They had accessed core training in first aid and food hygiene, as well as recent training around self evaluating their service. To identify further learning opportunities, we suggested evaluating the impact training had on the service and outcomes for children.

The childminder was aware of the Care Inspectorate Hub and received provider updates from the organisation. Regularly accessing resources and best practice documents will help ensure good outcomes for children.

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 appropriately support and extend children's learning and development, the childminder to ensure effective implementation of a system of observation and assessment which fully supports the progression of individual children's learning and development.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance, and best practice' (HSCS 4.11); and 'I am encouraged and helped to achieve my full potential' (HSCS Principles: Wellbeing).

This area for improvement was made on 9 December 2019.

Action taken since then

The childminder spent time observing children in different play and learning experiences, recording any significant learning by taking photos and sharing these with families. The childminder had a folder containing photos of children's experiences next to specific wellbeing indicators. This supported children to understand how their learning experience supported their wellbeing needs.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The childminder to develop strategies which ensure the involvement of children and parents in regularly assessing and improving the quality of the overall service.

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Standard 13: Improving the service; and Standard 14: Well managed service.

This area for improvement was made on 14 September 2015.

Action taken since then

Children had opportunities to be meaningfully involved in the development of the service through regular conversations with the childminder. Children were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas on a whiteboard, which the childminder used to plan experiences, snacks, and resources. The childminder sought parental feedback through regular face-to-face discussions and advised they were considering further ways parents could be more involved in the ongoing development of the service.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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