

Blakely, Julie Child Minding

Irvine

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 June 2025

Service provided by:
Julie Blakely

Service provider number:
SP2003902423

Service no:
CS2003004332

About the service

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

At the time of our inspection, eight children were registered with the service; one pre-5 child attended the service during the inspection.

The service is situated in a quiet residential area of Irvine, North Ayrshire. The children have access to the living room, kitchen, upstairs toilet and an enclosed rear garden. The childminder's home is near local amenities, including schools, nurseries, shops and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 5 June 2025 between 10:15 and 13:00. 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke to one child using the service
- received five completed Microsoft Forms questionnaires
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and support from a responsive childminder, which helped them feel safe, secure and loved.
- Children enjoyed opportunities to explore their local and wider community, which enhanced play and learning experiences.
- The childminder worked in partnership with families to ensure that children's needs were well supported and parents felt included in the service.
- The childminder was committed to the continuous development of the service and their own practice. This was supported by a culture of self-reflection and self-evaluation, which promoted positive outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

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.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The childminder was compassionate, respectful, and responsive in their engagement with children in their care. This enabled children to feel valued, loved, and secure.

Personal plans were in place for all children and included information needed to meet their health and wellbeing needs. These were developed and reviewed regularly on an online app with input from children's families who agreed they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plans. This supported consistency in children's care and support, including any emerging or changing needs.

Positive relationships had been formed between the childminder, children and their families. Families had the option to enter the service at drop-off and collection times. A parent shared, "The childminder will always let me know in advance of pickups if I need extra time to come in and discuss my child's care". Another commented, "We often have informal chats about what is happening in the setting". This helped families become familiar with the childminding setting and discuss important information about their child's care and support.

Healthy eating was promoted at the service and aligned with best practice guidance, 'Setting the table', which supported children's development and nutritional needs. The child who was present chose foods they liked, such as strawberries, and sat at a low table, which supported their comfort. The childminder supervised them as they ate, which kept them safe. They had opportunities to be independent, such as washing their hands before they ate and fed themselves. This encouraged them to be self-sufficient and develop a sense of responsibility.

The childminder was first aid trained and had a medication policy and procedure aligned with the Care Inspectorate's best practice guidance, 'Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services'. This meant that the childminder was well-placed to administer this safely for children who required medication at the setting. This supported children's health and wellbeing.

The childminder confidently discussed their responsibility to safeguard children in their care. A clear policy was in place, and the childminder had completed relevant training in protection and safeguarding; this ensured they had a robust understanding of their role and responsibility in protecting children. This ensured children were safe and protected.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

During our visit, the child happily helped the childminder select resources and materials for the story bags shared with all the children. This supported them in making choices and valued and respected their ideas and understanding of familiar stories.

The child followed their interests as they drew pictures through mark-making, which developed their early writing skills. They chose materials such as paper, pens, chalk, and boards. This enabled them to lead their play, supported their creativity and independence, and developed their fine motor skills and concentration as they engaged in meaningful play.

The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of children's development and provided play materials that supported and met their needs and development. For example, we reviewed evidence where children had spent long periods engaged in play and developed complexities in problem-solving experiences such as water play experiments, challenging jigsaw puzzles, and exploring their senses and creativity, which encouraged patience, perseverance, fine motor skills, and hand-eye coordination.

A big book captured older children's views and supported their awareness of best practices like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This enabled the childminder to adapt their approach, supported play and learning experiences to suit individual children, and ensured they felt heard and respected in all decisions.

The childminder tracked children's development and key milestones, including health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy skills. Observations and wow moments about children's play were documented and shared with their families on an online platform, which included a description of what children learned and plans for further development. One parent shared, "The childminder communicates well with us about our child's progress and plan. We have access to an app to review these, and we can also discuss these formally or informally whenever needed". Another commented, "The childminder updates the app regularly and gives great information at pick-up time to let us know what our children have been up to". This ensured children were supported and challenged in a way that was right for them.

How good is our setting?

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.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children attended a setting that was welcoming, homely, and comfortably furnished. They had ample indoor and outdoor space to support their play, exploration, and rest. One parent shared, "The childminder truly creates a home from home for our children, and they can relax and rest as needed". Another said, "The childminder offers a comforting home where our child feels relaxed. They can have downtime and relaxation whenever they want by having time on the couch with blankets, etc". This ensured children felt safe, settled, and secure in the setting.

Toys and resources supported child-initiated play, including dolls, a pram, puppets, books, figures, and playsets that supported role play and imagination. They were based on children's interests and requests, allowing them to make relevant and meaningful choices. An older child shared, "We have toys to play with, and we like to draw. We're all really kind to each other, and we sometimes give drawings to each other". One parent said, "The childminder is aware of our child's interests and likes to help them learn new things in relation to these. There is a choice within the setting as to what the children can play with based on their interests and curiosity".

A tuff tray contained natural, open-ended materials, such as leaves and twigs, which children had collected the day before in the woods. Sensory materials like sand and water toys were also accessible in the garden. During the visit, the child chose to play indoors before their nursery session in the afternoon.

Families shared that their children always have the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said, "Water and sand play and outdoor mark-making are always popular with our two". Another commented, "My child always tells me of their times outdoors at the childminder's, which is very often".

The childminder had good links within the local community, and children regularly visited local parks and woodlands, where they learned about nature. This developed their knowledge of their local and wider community and supported their health and wellbeing.

The childminder understood their role in promoting robust infection prevention and control practices that supported children's health and wellbeing. The spaces children accessed were clean, organised, and well-maintained. Handwashing was encouraged before snacks, and the childminder was also registered with Environmental Health to prepare food.

The childminder was aware of their responsibility to keep children safe in their care. They assessed the spaces within the home and in the community that children accessed and identified mitigation measures to reduce potential risks. This ensured children remained safe and secure when in the childminder's care.

Accident and incident forms were completed and shared with families, and appropriate first aid was administered when necessary. This was in accordance with best practice guidance and ensured the wellbeing and safety of children.

The childminder was registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which demonstrated they followed ICO guidelines on data protection when considering how they stored children's personal information confidentially and lawfully. This fostered a trusting environment that respected children's privacy.

How good is our 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.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder was welcoming and engaged well with the inspection process. They were responsive to our suggestions for development and open in their conversations. This showed that the service had a very good capacity for continued improvement, which supported positive outcomes for children.

The childminder created a clear vision statement for their service, which was shared with families before their children enrolled. This information helped families choose a service that aligned with their needs and supported the service's aims, which focused on the commitment to provide high-quality early learning and childcare through a child-centred approach that prioritised children's interests and wellbeing needs.

Children's and families' views were genuinely valued by the childminder, who understood their input as key to building positive relationships. They actively gathered feedback through informal and formal communication, including daily chats, text messages and questionnaires. One parent shared, "The childminder is always open to ideas, and they are very approachable". Another said, "We are regularly asked to fill in parental questionnaires and know that daily conversations are taken on board if the children are interested in something". This ensured children were cared for well and their families were at the heart of improvements.

The childminder actively sought the children's views and valued their ideas. This supported weekly activities and individual care and showed that children's rights were respected.

The childminder had embedded a culture of self-reflection and self-evaluation into their practice. They effectively used quality frameworks to evaluate and improve all aspects of the service by identifying areas for development, clear actions, and timeframes. They should continue to include the success and impact of the changes made for children. This would enable them to measure positive outcomes and ensure children continued to be supported to reach their full potential.

The childminder had developed a range of policies and procedures that aligned with best practice guidance, including the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS). They shared these with parents to ensure they knew what to expect from the service provided. The policies and procedures were reviewed regularly and amended to support best practice guidance and frameworks. This approach ensured high-quality play and learning and effective care.

The childminder had valid insurance for their service, contributing to a safe environment for children.

How good is our staff team?

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.

Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder provided a flexible and accommodating service, which fostered respectful and trusting relationships with families. One parent shared, "The childminder is very approachable and communicates well with us. They understand what we think is important for our child and value this". Another said, "The childminder always has time to give a detailed handover, puts us at ease during periods of transition for our children and is a big part of our children's lives. Nothing is ever too much bother and helps us with additional childcare to help ease the pressure of being full time working parents". The childminder was knowledgeable and experienced and clearly understood their positive impact on children's lives and development.

The childminder was dedicated to continuous professional development and had completed several training courses to enhance their knowledge and skills. They earned a Professional Development Award (PDA) in Childhood Practice at Level 8 and, most recently, were working towards a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Childhood Practice at Level 9 at university. Additionally, they participated in various training sessions, including safer sleep practices, tracking and observation, speech and language development, and trauma-informed practice delivered by North Ayrshire Council. The childminder regularly reflected on and discussed how this training

impacted their practice and outcomes for children. This commitment ensured children were cared for by a trained, competent, and skilled childminder.

The childminder kept up to date with developments in the sector through their partnership status with the local authority to deliver early learning and childcare, membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and registration with the Care Inspectorate, where they received provider updates. This ensured their practice was current and aligned with present legislation, best practice guidance and frameworks.

The childminder had close links with other local childminders and childcare professionals, which fostered a community where ideas and best practices could be shared. This enhanced their knowledge and skills and led to positive outcomes for children in their care.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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