

# Alice's Childminding Service

## Child Minding

Dunblane

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
22 May 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Alice Ullathorne

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000150

**Service no:**  
CS2023000231

## About the service

Alice's Childminding Service provides a service from their property in a quiet residential area of Dunblane. They are registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's own children. At the time of our inspection, 10 children were registered with the service.

The service is close to local primary schools, shops, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in a designated play space and kitchen area. They also have access to a fully enclosed rear garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 May 2025 between 12:00 and 14:30. One inspector carried out the inspection.

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.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with two children using the service and eight of their parents or carers
- received four completed questionnaires
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

Children were supported to feel safe and nurtured through the childminder's warm, responsive interactions, which promoted their overall wellbeing.

The childminder had established strong, positive relationships with children, parents and carers. Regular information sharing ensured that children's individual care needs were consistently met.

High quality learning experiences were provided, effectively supporting children's development in literacy, numeracy, creativity, imagination and critical thinking.

The childminder demonstrated a professional commitment to ongoing learning and development, with a clear focus on enhancing outcomes for children.

Practice was informed by feedback from families and current best practice guidance, ensuring a responsive and reflective approach to care, play and learning.

The childminder was committed to continuous improvement, self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were beginning to impact positively on children's outcomes.

## 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?	4 - 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

Children were nurtured through daily experiences. All parents told us that they strongly agreed that they had a strong connection with their childminder. When asked what they liked best about the service, one parent told us, "Everything! [the childminder] is a such sociable, nurturing person who genuinely cares about the children [the childminder] looks after". All interactions with children were compassionate and child-centred. This enabled children to build strong attachments with their childminder.

All children had personal plans that reflected key information about their care needs, likes and dislikes. This supported their wellbeing through effective planning. All parents told us they were able to regularly discuss their child's needs and to share any necessary changes to their children's care and support. For example, one parent told us that, "[The childminder] always has time for a quick update whenever needed". Another told us, "[The childminder] is most welcoming. I often text them to discuss what has happened in the day". As a result, families felt included and children received care that was right for them.

Children were fully supported to have periods of rest and sought comfort as and when needed. The childminder was attuned to children's cues and had a good understanding of safe sleep practice. This supported children's health and wellbeing.

Children always chose from a range of healthy foods that reflected their individual needs. The childminder had a full understanding of children's dietary needs and worked closely with parents to ensure food was right for them. This promoted healthy eating habits and respected their cultural and dietary needs. The childminder sat and chatted with children as they ate, providing a positive social mealtime.

Children were kept safe because the childminder had a very good understanding around safeguarding children. Appropriate procedures were in place and they understood the importance of safe storage and administration of medication. When required, treatment was given safely and effectively. This was supported by an appropriate policy and recording system.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had opportunities to be creative and explore natural materials, for example, playing with playdough and reading in the tent outside. This resulted in them being busy and engaged in high quality play and learning. The childminder always used skilled interactions to support children's curiosities and respond to their cues in a way that was right for them.

Children were empowered to share ideas and lead their own play and learning. Parents told us, "[The childminder] offers a range of opportunities and experiences based on what the children like to do. My child recently set up a zoo throughout the house, and all the children were involved. They used their imaginations and set up different enclosures and areas. They had a brilliant time and [the childminder] followed their interests and encouraged them throughout". As a result, the childminder was responsive to children's interests and demonstrated to children that their views mattered.

Children were well supported to develop their language, numeracy and literacy skills. For example, stories and music were used to support and extend the interests of children. The childminder used effective questioning which included counting and colour recognition to support fun, joy and stimulating experiences.

Experiences and learning were shared with parents through message functions, photos and at drop off and pick up. This enabled families to be involved in children's learning and development, with regular updates of their progress and achievements shared. Logs included, outings, focussed activities and visits within the community. The experiences encouraged children to explore and understand the world around them, while also promoting their wellbeing, confidence and learning.

The local community and surrounding areas were used by the childminder. Outings and visits included, trips to play groups, parks and local woodlands. This helped to extend their play and learning opportunities and to promote a sense of belonging.

### 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

The childminder's home was clean, cosy and welcoming, which provided a homely environment for the children. There was plenty natural light, with ample space for the child to move around, play and learn in. Children had full ownership of the conservatory space, with their artwork decorating the space. This was designed to meet their needs, with comfortable seating and child sized furniture which fully supported their needs. As a result, children could feel valued and respected.

Setting's indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces. The spaces were often adapted to offer a range of activities, for example, baby yoga and dancing. One parent told us, "It is difficult to cater for all age groups but [the childminder] is good at finding activities which all kids can enjoy". As a result, children experience high quality facilities that reflected their needs and interests.

The childminder carried out regular risk assessments and visual check to identify and minimise hazards within the environment. For example, the childminder was mindful of the temperature in the conservatory and had effective systems and procedures in place to manage the heat. They regularly checked in with children, asking how they were feeling and promoted drinking and playing outside. Risky play was well supported, with opportunities being given to children appropriate to their developmental stages. This was well supervised by the childminder to support children to explore their abilities and learn from their mistakes in a safe way.

Infection prevention and control procedures reflected current best practice. The childminder used appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves and aprons, when required. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at key times of the day, further reducing the risk of spread of infection.

### How good is our leadership?

**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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder provided a service that met the needs of individual children and families they cared for. Parents were kept informed of the childminder's holidays, this communication enabled them to prepare for childcare during planned time away. Families were supported with patterns of care they required, ensuring the service met their and their child's needs.

Aims and values were in place and reviewed regularly with children and parents. Regular check ins with parents provided opportunities for them to share their views and opinions. This allowed children and families to influence the care they experienced and supported them to feel valued.

Families were meaningfully involved and influenced change within the setting. Their views and opinions were sought through regular informal conversations and through emails. Updates and reminders were also sent via messaging services to include families and provide opportunities for them to ask questions or feedback. One parent told us, "[The childminder] is a positive and welcoming person. [The childminder] finds a way to encourage goodness in everything without it seeming too difficult". This demonstrated strong, positive relationships, which in turn supported effective and collaborative partnerships with families.

The childminder was effectively self-evaluating the service. They had taken time to reflect on quality of children's care, play and learning experiences. As a result, they identified strengths in their practice such as, nurturing care and knowing children well. They were beginning to identify areas for development to enhancing outcomes for children. For example, enhancing outdoor experiences for children and organising and streamlining paperwork. This demonstrated a commitment to continually improving practice to ensure children continued to receive high quality care and support.

## 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 Skills, knowledge and values

Children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's kind and nurturing approach. This ensured that children and families felt safe, valued and respected. The childminder had a clear understanding of how children learn and develop. They were kind and patient when interacting with children. One parent told us, "[The childminder] is a very responsible, intelligent, honest and trustworthy person". This impacted positively on children's overall wellbeing and promoted positive attachments.

Children were at the heart of the service. All parents told us they were always welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their child's care, play and learning. One parent told us, "[The childminder] is an amazing childminder and we feel our children could not be in a better environment. We trust [the childminder] 100% with all aspects of their care and development. [The childminder] works very hard to meet the needs of the children [the childminder] cares for". The childminder carefully considered their needs, likes and interests to support improvement within the service. They understood the benefits of reflective practice to enable them to focus on goals and provided more opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, the childminder had a positive, enabling attitude that effectively responded to changing needs and feedback to improve the service.

The childminder had a wealth of knowledge and experience of working with children. They kept their knowledge and practice up to date through continuous professional development. Recent professional development undertaken by the childminder included, First Aid and a Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) conference. They also stayed well-informed through regular updates from SCMA and the Care Inspectorate. They were able to confidently discuss the impact that their learning had had on their practice and how this supported high quality experiences for children.

The childminder showed very good reflective practice that positively impacted children. They understood the importance of reflecting on their own professional development to ensure they provided a high standard of care, play and learning. A record of training was in place to support reflections and identify further professional development needs. This provided opportunities to effectively reflect on learning and measure the impact on children's care, play and learning.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good



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