

Susan Macpherson Child Minding

Dingwall

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 September 2026

Service provided by:
Susan Macpherson

Service provider number:
SP2007965901

Service no:
CS2007156558

About the service

Susan Macpherson is registered as a childminder to care for a maximum of six children at any one 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 children of the childminder's family.

Susan Macpherson provides a childminding service from her home in a quiet residential area of Canon Bridge, near to the town of Dingwall. She makes use of the lounge, dining kitchen and toilet. The childminder makes very good use of the fully enclosed garden, which contains a good selection of age appropriate toys and equipment. The childminder also regularly uses various local resources including walks, play park and the woods.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17th September 2026 between 11:45 and 14:00. 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 with children using the service
- considered feedback from six families
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

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

- Children were all very happy, relaxed and enjoyed spending time and having fun in the care of the childminder.
- Children experienced nurturing and responsive care and support that consistently met their individual needs and supported them to feel safe, secure and valued.
- The childminder had established strong working relationships with families which supported good communication and information sharing.
- The childminder had developed a very warm, welcoming and homely setting with a wide range of resources, including loose parts and open ended resources, which the children could independently access.
- The childminder made very good use of the local area to enrich children's play and supported their development and learning.
- The childminder should review the vision, values and aims for the service as well as the policies and procedures.
- The childminder should continue to develop their approach to quality assurance and self assessment.

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

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children were cared for by a childminder who aimed to provide a nurturing 'home from home' experience and placed children at the heart of their service. This helped children to feel welcomed, valued and secure in the setting. This was confirmed by parents who commented, "it's like a home from home feel and that the childminder has such a great bond with my daughter and myself". The childminder was experienced and knowledgeable, motivated, and demonstrated their commitment to provide a service of a high standard where children received nurturing care and support and were safe while they had fun during their play and learning. The childminder engaged well with the inspection process and was open and responsive to our ideas and suggestions.

Information about the service, including its vision, values and aims, had been shared with parents to support their understanding of the care and experiences provided. However, this information had not been reviewed or refreshed for some time. It would be beneficial for the childminder to review their vision, values and aims in consultation with children and families. This would ensure that the vision, values and aims remained current and reflected the needs and views of children and families using the service.

The childminder recognised the importance of continuous improvement and regularly reflected on their practice. Self evaluation helped the childminder identify strengths and areas they would like to develop to ensure that they continued to deliver high quality care and learning tailored to the needs and choices of the children attending. The childminder encouraged children and families to be involved the evaluation of the service. They listened to and took account of the children's interests when introducing new experiences and activities and routinely asked families for informal feedback. Families felt actively involved and consistently expressed high satisfaction with the care provided. We encouraged the childminder to continue to develop approaches to gather and evaluate feedback from parents and carers, helping to ensure that all families have opportunities to influence service development. This would support the childminder to evidence how the views of children and families influence service developments and contribute to continuous improvement.

The childminder demonstrated their commitment to professional development and improving experiences and outcomes for children. They had attended a range of core training, including first aid and child protection training, to ensure they had the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding. They were also proactive in keeping up to date with best practice. Resources, such as the Care Inspectorate website and Scottish Childminding Association membership, helped the childminder stay current with sector changes. This contributed to improving the quality of care provided and supported continued service development.

The childminder routinely met up with other childminders in the area. This offered the opportunity for the childminders to share ideas, explore different approaches and receive both support and constructive challenge. This enhanced reflective practice and contributed to ongoing improvement, helping to ensure children benefitted from a well-informed and responsive service and contributed to improved outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Playing, learning and developing

Children comfortably and confidently engaged with a thoughtfully resourced and stimulating environment that supported their play, learning and development. The childminder demonstrated an understanding of children's individual developmental needs and interests and provided appropriate play experiences which encouraged their natural curiosity, imagination, problem-solving and emerging skills. Good use was being made of natural resources, loose parts and open ended resources. Younger children were able to independently access a range of resources, including construction toys, musical toys, role play, mark making and small-world play. This promoted children's choice and ability to lead or extend their play. One parent commented on how the childminder 'provides stimulating games to teach and learn, suitable for their level'. Throughout the inspection the children were engaged in their play and there was a great deal of fun, chat and laughter.

The childminder provided a well-balanced approach to child-led play and adult support, helping children build confidence, independence and key skills such as language, literacy, numeracy and emotional regulation. Children experienced very warm, nurturing and responsive interactions from the childminder who was attuned to their individual needs and interests. Sensitive and skilled interactions were used to extend and enrich children's thinking and learning. We observed the childminder making very good use of open ended questioning to encourage children to independently problem solve and to extend their imagination and learning. As a result, children were happy, settled, and actively engaged in their play.

Literacy and numeracy were promoted during play activities. The childminder supported play by counting, naming colours and modelling language. They allowed children sufficient time to process information and respond, supporting confidence and promoting speech, language and communication skills. Children were encouraged to develop language and communication through conversations and everyday interactions. Good use was also made of songs and rhymes to promote language skills. The childminder helped children extend their vocabulary by naming objects and talked about routines. As a result, children experienced positive opportunities to develop early literacy skills in a natural and meaningful way. Children could also access toys and games to support their understanding of numbers and numeracy, including colour-matching activities, tape measures, puzzles and Lego. This helped them develop number recognition and counting through play.

Children benefited from daily outdoor play either in the garden, the local park, woodland or other places of interest which supported their health, wellbeing, confidence and social skills. Outdoor play experiences were popular with all the children. Families spoke positively about the childminder's commitment to outdoor play and learning. Comments made included: "I like the range of outdoor places (childminder) takes them to" and "The children are outside playing in the garden most days. (childminder) even has spare jackets if needed".

Informal planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's individual needs and interest, ensuring a flexible and supportive environment. Observations of children's play and development informed tailored experiences that reflected their interests and individual next steps. The childminder thoughtfully planned activities that offered an appropriate balance between time spent in the home environment and opportunities to explore the local community. On the day of the inspection, the children had gone out to collect brambles and had then made a fruit puree for their snack the next day. Daily updates, including photographs and narratives, were shared with families to celebrate children's achievements and keep them informed. This strengthened partnerships with families, encouraged feedback, and supported continuity in learning enabling parents to build on their child's experiences at home.

The childminder should continue to build on the use of observations. Recording observations and identifying next steps could strengthen assessment and planning. For example, noting how children's speech and vocabulary was progressing, would provide clearer evidence of progression over time. This would help the childminder demonstrate the impact of experiences on children's development and inform future planning.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Nurturing care and support

There were three young children present on the day of the inspection who experienced consistent warm, kind, nurturing care from the childminder. They had secure attachments with the childminder who responded sensitively to their individual needs, offering praise, reassurance and comfort when required. The children were all very relaxed and confident in the childminder's care. They actively sought reassurance, comfort and support from the childminder, demonstrating that strong nurturing relationships had been established. Parents were very positive about their children's attachment with the childminder, "(childminder) is so caring and her environment is just full of love and fun", "My child feels safe and loved and comfortable with her childminder", "My child can look to (childminder) for care and support at any time and feels loved within the household".

Transitions and settling-in periods were carefully planned and adapted meet individual children's needs. The childminder prepared children for upcoming changes, such as lunchtime or going outdoors. This helped children understand and prepare for what was happening next. This meant children felt secure, valued and supported through daily routines and experiences.

Throughout the visit, the childminder was very attentive and responsive to the needs of each of the children. We saw lots of warm and nurturing interactions, chatting, smiles, praise and encouragement. The children confidently played together on their own or invited the childminder to join their play. Children were supported to be respectful and considerate to each other, encouraged to take turns or share resources. This promoted positive peer relationships and social skills.

There were individual personal plans in place for each of the children, and the childminder was able to confidently discuss the care needs for each of the children attending. Personal plans contained relevant background information and details of the child's routine which supported continuity of care. The plans were completed with parents and carers and routinely reviewed to ensure that they were up to date and continued to meet the changing needs of the children and allowed for consistency of care.

Children experienced care in an environment where their privacy and dignity were respected. Younger children were invited calmly and sensitively to have their care needs met. Nappy changing arrangements protected privacy and care was tailored to individual needs. The childminder gently supported handwashing. This approach helped children to feel respected, valued and comfortable within the setting.

Daily routines, such as mealtimes, were used to promote independence, learning and enhance children's experiences. Mealtimes were enjoyable, safe and promoted healthy eating habits. We observed a very relaxed, calm and sociable lunchtime with the children and childminder sitting together. This supported supervision, social skills and language development. Fresh water was available to children throughout the day to support children to remain hydrated.

Partnerships with families was a key strength of the service. The childminder worked closely with families to ensure they supported children's routines and preferences. Parents were very positive when discussing their relationship with the childminder and how welcome they were made to feel. Having strong working relationships with the parents allowed for open communication and information sharing as well as ensuring consistency of care. Regular communication was maintained through daily informal updates and the sharing of photographs and messages via their mobile phone.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

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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