

Sarah Cook's Child Minding Service

Child Minding

Turriff

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 July 2026

Service provided by:
Sarah Cook

Service provider number:
SP2008972577

Service no:
CS2008192265

About the service

Sarah Cook's Child Minding Service is provided from the childminder's home in a quiet residential area in the town of Turriff in Aberdeenshire.

The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than six are under 12 years; of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and; of whom no more than one is under 12 months.

Five children were registered with the service at the time of our inspection.

Children are cared for within the downstairs of the property, with access to a playroom and a purpose-built play area within an enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 July 2026 between 11:20 and 14:40. 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:

- spent time with two children using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- received two completed questionnaires from parents/carers
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

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 happy, safe and having fun, reflecting the core values of the service.
- Interactions between the childminder and children were consistently nurturing, kind and caring and responsive to children's needs.
- Strong partnerships with families were established, contributing to positive outcomes for children.
- The rich play and learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, provided children with engaging, challenging and stimulating play experiences.
- Further involving children and families in reviewing the service would strengthen self-evaluation and help inform developments.

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	5 - Very 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

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The childminder consistently promoted the vision, values and aims for their service, demonstrating warm, respectful interactions and a child-centred approach. The vision to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment, and work in partnership with parents, was evident in practice. The childminder offered settling in sessions to new families, aiming to build trusting relationships and understand children's needs. Parents told us they were very happy with the care and support their children received. This was reflected in the positive culture and children's experiences, which promoted a sense of wellbeing and belonging.

Parents told us that they felt informed through regular communication about their children's progress. Information was shared with families through online message and daily conversations. For example, photographs of play and learning were shared on a regular basis. As a result, families were well supported, and confident that the childminder worked with them to meet their children's needs.

The childminder recognised the importance of self-evaluation although processes were mostly informal. The childminder was familiar with key guidance which they used to develop policies and support practice. Tools such as parent questionnaires had been used previously to gather ideas. Further developing systems for gathering feedback from children and families would ensure that all views are considered and reflected in future improvements. We encouraged the childminder to build on this by using the quality indicators from the Care Inspectorate's 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sector: Childminding'. Recording the impact of any changes on outcomes for children would further strengthen improvement processes.

A quality assurance system was in place and used effectively to monitor and record key information. Policies and procedures were clear and had recently been reviewed, reflecting current legislation and best practice. These were shared with families, helping them to know what to expect from the service. The childminder carried out regular audits of the environment, ensuring safe measures were in place for day-to-day practice. We discussed further developing risk assessments to consider children's experiences out with the home. This would strengthen planning and help ensure their wellbeing and safety are effectively supported.

The childminder was passionate about developing the service, showing a proactive approach to improvements such as enhancements to the outdoor area. They demonstrated a commitment to ongoing professional learning, for example, using knowledge from STEM training to influence the play experiences for children. One parent commented that the childminder's home had a 'fantastic outside for the children to safely play in.' The childminder's positive approach to continuous learning and development meant that children and families experienced a well-managed service that provided safe, consistent care.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Children were happy, engaged and having fun. They were enthusiastic and motivated by the range of high-quality play experiences available to them indoors and outdoors. For example, the children asked to set up a ball pit, then added on a teepee to make a den. They were given time and space to explore using light up tubes, supporting their curiosity and imaginative play. As a result of this responsive approach, children were confident and actively involved in directing their own play and learning.

The childminder demonstrated consistently positive and respectful interactions, which supported children to express themselves and communicate their needs. We saw a balance of child led and adult led interactions, including interactive games and singing together. Children were able to follow their own interests, freely making choices from the accessible resources and equipment in the playroom. They played independently and together, enjoying playdough, threading beads and building creative structures with blocks. This enabled them to sustain and extend their play in imaginative ways.

Opportunities to promote and develop literacy, numeracy, and physical development were embedded throughout the play and learning environment. The outdoor space offered a rich and stimulating play area with places to climb, relax and explore. A purpose built 'play ranch' was very well resourced, including a water station, sand tray, mud kitchen, swing and planters. Children enjoyed watering the flowers and growing vegetables and strawberries, giving a sense of responsibility and providing rich and meaningful learning opportunities.

Children were engaged and enthusiastic during a bug hunt, using binoculars and recording their findings on a checklist. They invited us to look, sharing 'we saw a little snail and a worm and a spider.' During interactions, the childminder skilfully used questioning, wondering and thinking aloud to build understanding and vocabulary. This fostered children's curiosity, communication and social skills.

Observations reflected children's individual needs and stages of development, including relevant next steps and strategies to support children to succeed. This resulted in children experiencing consistent high-quality care and learning opportunities which were well matched to their needs.

Families told us they were involved and included in their children's learning and development journey, receiving regular updates on their child's progress and achievements. Plans were detailed, individual to children and linked to skills for life and learning. One parent shared that the childminder 'encourages them to continue to progress in all aspects of life.' These approaches supported communication with families and provided high-quality information on children's care and learning.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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. Children experienced warm, kind and responsive care from the childminder, who knew them very well. Children were safe and sensitively cared for within a nurturing environment that promoted their independence and development. For example, children's ideas were asked for and included, helping them make choices about their play, learning and daily routines. Transitions were supported by smooth routines and consistent expectations, helping children to express their needs and feel emotionally secure.

Families felt welcomed into the service to discuss their child's care, play and learning. Parents commented that the childminder offered 'a lovely family environment' and 'cares deeply' about the children and their families. This supported nurturing relationships and positive attachments that fostered children's wellbeing.

Information in personal plans detailed children's likes, preferences and individual needs. These were shared and updated with parents regularly, in line with guidance, to ensure information remained accurate and relevant. The childminder worked in partnership with parents to understand and support children's care needs, for example using agreed strategies to support emotional regulation. This meant that children experienced care that was tailored to their individual needs and promoted their wellbeing.

Mealtimes were relaxed and unhurried, providing children with a calm, sociable experience that encouraged important life skills. Food was provided by families and was safely prepared and attractively presented. The childminder encouraged children to drink water throughout the day, supporting them to stay hydrated. Infection, prevention and control was well managed, including using a handwashing song to encourage effective personal hygiene. Spaces were well organised, with areas for children to rest and play clearly defined. As a result, children were safe, healthy and comfortable in their environment.

Effective policies and procedures were in place to support the safe administration, storage and review of medication. This meant children's health needs and wellbeing were being managed safely and effectively.

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	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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