

Gillian Birnie Childminding Child Minding

Ellon

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 July 2026

Service provided by:
Gillian Birnie

Service provider number:
SP2017989540

Service no:
CS2017362445

About the service

Gillian Birnie Childminding operate from their property situated in a residential housing development in Newburgh, Aberdeenshire.

The childminder may care for a maximum of 7 children at any one time up to 16 years of age:

- of whom no more than 6 are under 12 years,
- of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school, and
- of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on certificate.

No overnight care will be provided.

At the time of the inspection, 11 children were registered with the service and attended on different days.

During the inspection, 5 children were present.

The service is close to the local primary school, shop, park and beach. The children are cared for in the living room and kitchen with access to a downstairs toilet. Children have access to an enclosed rear garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 July 2026 between 09:00 and 12:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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:

- interacted with 5 children using the service,
- reviewed six completed questionnaires from families,
- spoke with the childminder,
- observed practice and daily experiences, and
- 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 confident, happy and having fun in the service.
- The childminder knew the children very well and provided high-quality play and learning opportunities which promoted confidence and children's interests.
- Children took part in a range of high-quality outdoor learning experiences which supported their self-resilience and creativity.
- Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were effective to support high-quality care, play and learning.
- Children experienced warm, kind and nurturing care, supporting them in developing strong relationships and social skills.

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	5 - Very 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 5 - Very Good

Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The childminder's vision, values and aims were embedded in their practice. These were shared with families through a welcome booklet, helping to ensure families knew what to expect from the service and that their expectations were met. This promoted a safe, home from home environment where children were happy and nurtured. The childminder's values included children being well supported in their learning. This was evident through children's confidence in using play equipment at the park. Specific, identified needs of children in the childminder's care were supported by professional learning opportunities undertaken by the childminder.

The childminder used self-evaluation to deliver high-quality care and learning tailored to the needs and choices of children and their families. They had used current guidance and challenge questions from the 'Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: Childminding' to identify what they did well and any areas for improvement. This led to an improvement plan which focussed on developing the garden for safe play and in supporting the childminder's own health and wellbeing giving themselves time to complete paperwork and organise children's files.

The childminder used feedback from children and families to support continuous improvement of the service. Questionnaires were used effectively to gather opinions and suggestions. For example, parents were able to choose their preferred form of communication, contributing to improved relationships and the sharing of information about their child's learning and development. Overall, feedback from parents was very positive and they were happy with the service. A parent commented, "[the childminder] takes our suggestions on board and uses them to support my child's interests and development, helping to ensure the care provided is responsive and continually improving." Another parent said, "[the childminder] is open to feedback...making us feel involved in developing the service." This contributed to collaborative relationships and communication. Children's voice was respected and heard through their play and learning experiences and routines. For example, at snack, some children chose to come and eat while some children chose to complete art activities.

A quality assurance system was in place which led to high-quality outcomes for children and families. Effective use of risk assessments, medication systems and personal plans supported children's safety and wellness. The childminder had systems in place to review policies, procedures, and personal plans with families ensuring that information held was current. The childminder utilised support such as Scottish Childminding Association, Local Authority and local childminders to support practice and share information. As a result, children and families were well supported and received high-quality care and support.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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 had fun and were fully engaged in activities of their choice. They were offered a range of open-ended resources which supported different stages of development and learning. This included building dens, crafts and using Lego. A parent commented, "activities are tailored to my child's interests and stage of development, helping them build confidence, independence and new skills while having fun."

The garden was undergoing some maintenance and was not used during the inspection. However, this was well-resourced with play equipment including a mud kitchen, loose parts and a trampoline. These were fully risk assessed to keep children safe. Parents valued the outdoor experiences offered by the childminder, with one commenting, "These experiences help support their physical development, confidence, curiosity and understanding of the world around them."

Children's learning in the community was valued. We accompanied the childminder and children on a visit to the park. Children enjoyed exploring hidden dens, playing on the slide and going along the obstacle course. Children told us they enjoyed going to the park and the beach. Outings to local music classes and a café where children interact with elderly residents helped to support children to develop positive relationships and social skills. Children participated in school transition events and open days, with the childminder enabling attendance at these. These opportunities allowed children to develop their sense of place and of being a part of the community.

Children experienced responsive interactions which were kind and encouraging. The childminder sat with children on the floor, helping them build dens and work together co-operatively. This created a positive ethos where children shared resources and played together. Children were kept safe through positive boundaries, for example when walking to the park.

The childminder supported development of communication, language and numeracy through everyday routines. For example, counting the segments of an orange arranged as a caterpillar and singing nursery rhymes while washing hands. This supported children in developing skills for life and experiencing joy in their learning.

The childminder had completed a qualification in childcare and spoke positively about how this supported their understanding of children's development. This was reflected in their child-centred planning approaches. They were skilled at recognising children's different stages of development and in providing the individual support they needed, for example when supporting safe use of scissors. As a result, children were independent and successful learners.

Children's learning and development were supported through ongoing observations and the use of a developmental progress chart. Observations were individualised and shared with families, strengthening collaborative approaches to supporting each child's progress. However, most observations were not dated, which limited the childminder's ability to track learning over time and demonstrate progression. To ensure children's development is clearly evidenced, the childminder should consistently date all observations and developmental charts so that progress can be accurately monitored and reviewed.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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 care which was patient, warm and kind. The childminder was respectful in her interactions with children and children felt relaxed in her care. Children told us, "[the childminder] makes me happy" and "[the childminder] is kind and friendly".

Children were given advance notice to undertake daily routines such as handwashing and getting ready to go to the park. They were familiar with these routines which promoted a sense of independence and responsibility.

Children's privacy and dignity was respected through thoughtful and well-timed interactions and support. The childminder balanced allowing children to have independence with being responsive when children asked for help. Children were able to rest on comfy seating or make dens on the floor with cushions and blankets. Children were able to independently use different spaces in the home which impacted their ability to regulate their emotions and relax.

Children experienced positive, well-supported mealtimes. Most children enjoyed food brought from home, this meant their dietary and preferences were met. Children were able to show independence and be involved through fruit preparation. For example, a younger child used a child safe knife, and an older child was well-supervised using a sharp knife. The childminder supported this with discussion about how to hold the knife safely and to tuck fingers away. Children were well supervised to keep them safe while eating, with the childminder sitting with them and modelling social interactions. Children had access to water bottles throughout the day to keep them hydrated.

Children were cared for by a childminder who knew them very well. All children had a personal plan which was developed in partnership with parents and reviewed within legislation. Changes to children's care needs, for example no longer requiring naps, ensured personal plans were relevant and reflected children's current stage of development. A parent commented, "Personal care plans are reviewed together...This collaborative approach helps ensure my child receives consistent, individualised care that meets their needs."

Children's care was well supported through chronologies which recorded significant events in a child's life and actions the childminder has taken to support the child and family. This meant children and their families were provided with the support and help they needed.

The childminder was knowledgeable in processes and guidance in administering medication safely. This ensured that children were kept safe and well.

The childminder had built positive relationships with children and families, most of whom had attended the service for a number of years. They valued families and wanted to provide a high-quality service that meets their needs. Photographs and videos were shared with families, helping to keep them informed and confident in the care their child received.

One parent commented, "[the childminder] provides a warm, nurturing and reliable environment, and my child is always very happy to attend".

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very 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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