

Little Oak Childminding Child Minding

Banchory

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 August 2026

Service provided by:
Kirsty Fraser

Service provider number:
SP2024000132

Service no:
CS2024000188

About the service

Little Oak Childminding operates from their property situated in a residential housing development in Drumoak, Aberdeenshire.

The childminder may care for a maximum of 6 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
- of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household. Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on certificate. No overnight care will be provided. The upper level of the garden will not be used.

At the time of our inspection up to four children were present.

The service is close to the local primary school, shop, play parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living area, playroom and dining 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 18 August 2026 between 08:45 and 13:00. 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- interacted with two children using the service
- reviewed five completed questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily 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 experienced kind and respectful care by a childminder who knew them well.
- Regular access to outdoor learning and community experiences supported children's wellbeing.
- Children were cared for in a warm, welcoming and homely environment.
- The childminder had completed professional development which supported them in their practice.
- 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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - 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 had vision, values and aims in place. These included providing a "homely and welcoming atmosphere to relax, play and have fun with each other in a safe environment". The childminder had not yet reviewed these with families and had identified this as an area for development. This would help ensure the service reflected the current needs and experiences of those currently attending the service.

There were some opportunities for children and families to share their views and contribute to the development of the service. This included observations and daily conversations with children and families. Parents told us they felt consulted and confident that their views and suggestions would be listened to and acted upon. One parent commented: "[the childminder] will often ask for feedback from both myself and the kids." The childminder had also recently introduced a digital communication app to further strengthen engagement with parents. To support continuous improvement, the childminder should develop approaches to gather and evaluate feedback from parents and carers, helping to ensure that all families have opportunities to influence service development.

The childminder was developing their use of self-evaluation to reflect on their practice. They used current guidance including A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: Childminding to identify strengths and areas for development. They had also attended training to enhance their understanding of self-evaluation for improvement. This demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement. For example, toys and games had been reorganised to make them more accessible, supporting children's independence and choice. In addition, a garden area had been developed, providing children with increased opportunities for active, outdoor play. We discussed the importance of continuing to develop self-evaluation approaches, with a greater focus on assessing the impact of changes and improvements on children's experiences and outcomes. This would support the childminder to drive continuous improvement and ensure positive outcomes for children.

A quality assurance system was in place and a range of policies and procedures was available to support the effective running of the service. These linked to current best practice guidance including the Health and Social Care Standards and Setting the Table. This helped support consistent practice and contributed to positive outcomes for children and their families.

Interactions were warm, respectful and responsive. The childminder gave children time, attention and reassurance. During the visit, the childminder made good eye contact and listened carefully to children, helping them feel valued and included. The childminder recognised the challenges of balancing the needs of minded children and family members and should continue to be mindful of the experiences of all children within the setting.

Children's health and wellbeing were supported as the childminder had completed core training, including food hygiene, paediatric first aid and child protection. They had also attended additional professional learning which was informing their observations of children's learning. To support continuous improvement, the childminder should further develop their reflection on training. This would help identify strengths in practice and any future learning and development needs.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

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.

Children were cared for in a warm, welcoming and homely environment. One parent commented that the childminder's home was "safe, secure and welcoming". Children played in the living room where they had room to move freely and explore. Comfortable sofas provided a place to rest and relax while a small soft slide supported active play and physical development. The dining table in the kitchen offered space for creative activities and mealtimes. As a result, children had ample space to meet their needs.

The outdoor area was fully enclosed and secure, providing a safe space for active play. Although children did not play outdoors during the inspection, parents spoke positively about their children's outdoor experiences. One parent commented: "[The childminder] provides a wide range of activities outdoors with going to the park, in the mud kitchen, growing fruit and vegetables." A variety of toys and materials encouraged children to explore and supported play and learning experiences. These included a mud kitchen, slide and some natural, open ended resources. The childminder explained they were sourcing more real-life, open-ended materials. This would further support children's creativity, problem solving skills and imagination.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place to reduce the potential spread of infection. For example, the childminder used apron and gloves when nappy changing. Children were supported to wash hands at appropriate times and were provided with individual towels. We reminded the childminder to ensure food preparation and eating surfaces were consistently kept clear and cleaned prior to use. This would further strengthen hygiene practices to support children's health.

Children experienced a safe and secure environment. Regularly reviewed risk assessments were in place for indoor and outdoor environments. The childminder promoted safe practices by encouraging children to tidy away resources and providing support when children used the small slide. Additional procedures, including keeping the front door locked, helped ensure children could not leave the setting unsupervised. Children were encouraged to develop an awareness of their own safety through discussion and guidance, including when participating in community outings. As a result, children were learning to manage risks appropriate to their age and stage of development within a safe and nurturing environment.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Children could make choices about their play and independently access a range of toys and games. These were suited to their interests and stages of development. For example, children engaged in imaginative play while cooking in the play kitchen and building models with blocks. An older child spent time making crafts, with resources readily available for independent access. This gave the child the freedom to choose what they wanted to create and develop their creativity. A child told us, "I like playing with the other children." Parents told us their children enjoyed attending the service and always had plenty to do. One parent commented, "[The childminder] provides a wide range of experiences and opportunities from growing and tasting vegetables and fruit they've grown, to baking, water fights, crafts of all varieties, going to the park." Another parent shared, "There are lots of activities for all of the children- so they are all delighted."

The childminder had a good understanding of how children developed and progressed in their learning. The childminder was calm and patient and used a variety of approaches to respond to cues that supported children's self-regulation, empathy and curiosity. For example, when a child's model got knocked down, the childminder acknowledged the child felt sad and offered support to rebuild it. This meant children were supported to develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships.

Literacy and numeracy were promoted during play activities. Children were able to access a variety of books and mark making activities and the use of songs and rhymes promoted early communication and language skills. Children could also access toys and games to support their understanding of numbers and numeracy, including colour-matching activities, tape measures, timers, puzzles and Lego. As a result, children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced.

Observations of younger children's experiences and learning were used to identify next steps and support their continued progress. This helped ensure learning experiences reflected children's individual needs and interests. To further strengthen practice, the childminder should increase opportunities for older children to contribute to setting their own goals and identifying next steps in their learning. This would promote independence, confidence and decision-making skills while supporting children to take greater ownership of their achievements.

Children benefited from regular outings to the cinema, children's groups and play parks within the local and wider community. These experiences supported children's confidence, independence and social skills while helping them develop positive relationships within their local community.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Children were cared for by a childminder who demonstrated positive, nurturing relationships. Interactions were kind and respectful, supporting children to express their needs and feelings. As a result, children appeared secure and comfortable within the setting. A parent told us, "[the childminder] knows [my child's] character so well". A child said: "I like laughing with [the childminder]."

Transitions and daily routines were well-managed and promoted respect and independence. Parents commented they felt "welcome anytime" and "never feel like I have to wait at the door when I pick the kids up." Flexible settling-in arrangements supported individual needs. During our visit, a child attended for a settling visit. The childminder welcomed the family when they arrived and shared how the visit had gone at pick up, supporting communication and positive relationships.

The childminder promoted dignity and respect during personal care routines. Nappy changing arrangements protected children's privacy and care was tailored to individual needs. Safe sleeping arrangements were in place for children who rested during the day. This included the use of a travel cot and regular checks on the minded child while they slept. A parent told us their child had "scheduled nap times" while another parent commented that their child "doesn't nap but can cuddle up if [they] wanted anytime." As a result, children received safe, sensitive care that supported their wellbeing.

Food and drink provided were healthy, nutritious and aligned with current dietary guidance. The childminder sat with children, modelling positive social interactions. The childminder demonstrated a good awareness of choking risks by supervising children and ensuring foods were prepared appropriately. Children used appropriate seating, including a highchair for younger children. This contributed to a safe and sociable mealtime experience.

Children were cared for by a childminder who knew them well. All children had a personal plan which was developed in partnership with parents. During discussion, the childminder demonstrated a good understanding of the children's care and learning needs and how these were being met. Older children had completed 'all about me' information that detailed their likes/dislikes and interests. We asked that the childminder completed reviews at least six monthly, in line with current legislation. This would ensure the childminder had information that reflected children's current needs.

The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of medication procedures and had an appropriate policy in place. For one child, there was insufficient information about the signs and symptoms requiring medication and the action to take if it was ineffective. This was discussed with the childminder who took immediate action to develop an additional medical care plan and review the information with parents. This supported children's health, safety and wellbeing.

The childminder recognised the importance of working in partnership with parents. One parent said that "the relationship my kids have built with [the childminder] is just perfect" and another said the childminder is "approachable, flexible and easy to work with. I trust that [the childminder is] giving me accurate, genuine information about how the session with my child has been". Children's learning and experiences were shared with parents through a recently implemented digital communication app. This helped families feel informed and confident in the care their child received.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the service was registered. Details of any upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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