

Nicola Kerr Childminding Services

Child Minding

Dunoon

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 July 2026

Service provided by:
Nicola Kerr

Service provider number:
SP2024000651

Service no:
CS2025000020

About the service

Nicola Kerr Childminding Services provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area in Toward, Dunoon.

Conditions of registration.

1. 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 and;
 - of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

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

3. No overnight care will be provided

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 23 July 2026 between 10:45 and 13:30. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the service registered as this was the first inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three children using the service
- received completed questionnaires from parents
- 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 warm, nurturing, and responsive care that helped them feel safe, valued, and emotionally supported.
- Children benefited from quality play, learning and development opportunities that promoted independence, children's interests and extend children's knowledge.
- Strong partnerships with parents enhanced outcomes for children and helped ensure continuity between home and the setting supporting children's wellbeing and development.
- The environment promoted independence, exploration, and wellbeing through a well-organised indoor and outdoor environment where children freely chose resources and explored their interests.
- The childminder demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement through reflecting on their practice and developing their service to provide the best possible experiences and outcomes for children and families.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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

Quality Indicator: 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.

Children experienced high-quality care and support that reflected the childminder's clear vision, values and aims for the service. The childminder created a safe, nurturing, and happy environment where children could thrive and develop, while parents and carers felt confident that their children were receiving quality play, care, and learning. The childminder shared the service's vision, values and aims with families when children started attending the setting. As a result, parents understood the childminder's strong commitment to providing high-quality childcare, play and learning experiences. Parents told us:

'Caring, nurturing, safe environment. Our child enjoys going and feels comfortable from the minute she/he sets foot in the door. It is fun and a loving home environment. We find the childminder is approachable, knowledgeable, and involved at all times.'

'The childminder is very reliable and approachable. As a parent this makes me feel calm which is something I value about the service.'

As the service continues to develop and welcome new children and families, we encouraged the childminder to review and refresh the vision, values and aims in consultation with children and families. This would help ensure they remained relevant, reflected the aspirations of those using the service and supported the continued delivery of high standards.

We found the childminder to be passionate and dedicated to her role. She spoke positively about her work and described it as a privilege to care for children and support families. Throughout our visit, she demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for children and families and showed pride in continuously maintaining and developing the quality of the service. Her leadership and dedication created a positive ethos that underpinned the day-to-day experiences of children and families. A Parent told us, 'We feel very lucky to have found this childminder. They provide exactly the kind of environment we were looking for a real home-from-home setting. They genuinely care about the children, know all their likes and dislikes, and goes above and beyond to support them and their families.'

The childminder valued and actively sought the views of children and parents to support the development of the service. We found the childminder maintained regular and meaningful communication with parents at drop-off and collection times and used 'Messenger' to share information and maintain ongoing dialogue. This open approach helped build positive relationships and ensured parents remained informed and involved in their child's experiences.

Evidence sampled showed that the childminder listened to children and used their ideas, interests, and preferences to influence activities, experiences, and outings. For example, through conversations and observations. This approach helped children feel respected, valued and included in decision-making. As a result, children understood that their opinions mattered and that they could influence aspects of their play and learning.

The childminder had begun to familiarise herself with and use A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sectors: Childminding (Care Inspectorate, 2025), alongside other current best practice guidance. She reflected on her practice and considered how improvement frameworks could support positive outcomes for children and families. This demonstrated a positive commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance.

To build on this strong foundation, we encouraged the childminder to continue using self-evaluation and best practice guidance to support ongoing reflection, review, and improvement planning. Recording evidence of developments and improvements would further strengthen the service's improvement journey and help demonstrate the positive impact on outcomes for children.

The childminder demonstrated a commitment to professional learning through maintaining a membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and completing relevant training, including paediatric first aid and child protection. The childminder told us they were enthusiastic about child-centred, play-based practice. We discussed training to support and build on the development of rich learning experiences that promote children's curiosity, creativity, and independence. We recognised the challenges associated with living and working in a remote area. However, we would encourage the childminder to continue accessing professional learning opportunities as part of their ongoing development.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Children experience high-quality spaces.

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 provided a welcoming, clean, comfortable, and well-maintained home environment that supported children's wellbeing and development. The setting benefitted from good ventilation, plenty of natural light and ample space for children to play, learn and relax. Children accessed the playroom, living room, bathroom facilities and a secure outdoor garden, all of which contributed to a nurturing, home-from-home atmosphere. The environment conveyed a strong message that children were valued, respected, and cared for, helping them feel safe, secure, and confident within the setting. Parents told us:

'We are extremely pleased with our childminder they are caring, reliable, and create a safe and fun environment for the children. Communication is great, and it is clear they genuinely care about the children's wellbeing and development. I would not hesitate to recommend them.'

'This service really is a home from home; there is no ask ever too big. My little one absolutely adores them and their time spent there with his/her friends. The childminder deserves all the credit they can be given for creating such a welcoming, nurturing, and homely environment.'

The childminder actively promoted children's independence and encouraged them to direct their own play and learning. She organised resources thoughtfully so that children could access them easily and make choices about their play. During the inspection, we observed that the childminder responded effectively to children's interests by providing resources and experiences that reflected their preferences. For example, children had access to imaginative play materials, malleable play resources and a variety of open-ended materials that encouraged creativity and exploration. Resources were appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the children attending the service and supported a broad range of learning opportunities.

The childminder demonstrated a genuine passion for outdoor play and learning. Children regularly accessed opportunities to gain experience about their wider world. The childminder made very good use of the local community and surrounding environment to enhance children's experiences. Children visited local beaches, parks, the post office, village shops, and other places of interest within the community. These experiences supported children to develop connections with their local area, learn about the world around them and gain confidence in different environments. Regular access to outdoor experiences also promoted physical wellbeing through fresh air, exercise, and active play.

The indoor and outdoor environments provided a wide range of experiences that supported children's learning, development, and wellbeing. Children benefitted from spaces that encouraged creativity, physical activity, problem-solving, and social interaction. The thoughtful organisation of resources and learning spaces enabled children to lead their own play, make choices, and follow their interests with confidence. As a result, children experienced quality play spaces that supported the development of important skills for life and learning.

The childminder had completed risk assessments to help ensure children remained safe while accessing the environment and participating in activities. Regular checks were carried out to ensure play spaces and equipment remained well maintained and suitable for children's use. We discussed the importance of reviewing risk assessments regularly to ensure they continued to reflect current circumstances and best practice guidance. This would further strengthen the safe and supportive environment already provided.

We were satisfied that the childminder had effective infection prevention and control measures in place. She promoted good hand hygiene, responded promptly to children's personal care needs, maintained high standards of cleanliness, and ensured good ventilation throughout the home. These measures helped reduce the risk of infection and supported children to remain safe and healthy while attending the service.

The childminder maintained registration with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), ensuring that personal information relating to children and families was managed and stored appropriately.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Play, 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.

During the inspection, we found that children were relaxed, happy and engaged in their play. They confidently and independently accessed the resources available to them and made choices about how they spent their time. The childminder interacted warmly and meaningfully with children during play, extending their language, encouraging conversations, and introducing new vocabulary. The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of child development and how children learn, which enabled her to provide quality experiences that supported children's learning and development.

A parent told us, 'The most positive aspects of our child's experience at the childminder's are the caring and nurturing environment, along with the wide range of activities she/he takes part in. They spend lots of time outdoors, whether that is in the garden, at the beach, or exploring nature, which I think is amazing for their development. I also really value the learning experiences she/he has, like watching frog spawn grow, seeing cows, and observing birds building nests. These hands-on experiences are so beneficial and something she/

he really enjoys. Most importantly, our child is always happy and settled, which shows how comfortable and well cared for she/he is. The strong communication and supportive relationship we have with the childminder makes a big difference too.'

The childminder had organised her home thoughtfully to promote children's independence and choice. Children benefited from access to a dedicated playroom and an outdoor environment that had been adapted to meet their needs and interests. This enabled them to move freely, lead their own play, and make choices about where and how they learned. As a result, children experienced play and learning that supported curiosity, confidence, and independent thinking.

The childminder celebrated children's achievements effectively. She gathered meaningful evidence of children's learning and development and used this to inform planning. Children's voices, achievements, and interests were recorded and linked to the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators, enabling the childminder to monitor progress, recognise achievements and plan appropriate next steps in learning. This approach supported children to experience learning that was responsive, personalised, and relevant to their individual needs and interests.

Children benefited from a range of stimulating experiences both indoors and outdoors. The childminder planned daily opportunities for outdoor play and learning, making effective use of the local community. Children regularly visited the beach, parks, and local areas of interest, including opportunities to observe and interact with animals. Evidence demonstrated that children participated in a rich variety of experiences, developed friendships, built connections within their community, and enjoyed regular opportunities for fresh air, exercise, and exploration.

Resources and experiences throughout the setting were easily accessible and carefully matched to children's ages, stages, and interests. As a result, children developed a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning. The quality of interactions, experiences and resources supported children's confidence, creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills during lunch and when playing with the playdough, arts, crafts, and sand.

Throughout these experiences, the childminder provided consistent praise, warmth, and encouragement. She effectively modelled language and communication, supporting children's social development, confidence, and emerging literacy skills.

Moving forward, we encouraged the childminder to continue developing the formats for documenting observations, assessments, and children's learning journeys. Strengthening this area would support her to further capture children's ideas, aspirations, curiosities, and progress over time. In line with the principles of 'Realising the Ambition,' this would help ensure that planning remained responsive, child-centred and focused on meaningful learning experiences and next steps tailored to children's individual needs and interests.

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.

During the inspection, children appeared happy, settled, and secure in the care of the childminder. They had developed exceptionally positive and trusting relationships with her, and we observed warm, nurturing interactions throughout the day. The childminder demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of each child, confidently describing their individual personalities, likes, dislikes, routines, achievements, and progress. This showed that the childminder knew the children exceptionally well and used this knowledge to provide highly responsive care and support.

Through observations, discussions and the evidence sampled, we found that the childminder placed children's individual needs, preferences, and wellbeing at the centre of their practice. Their strong understanding of each child's personality, family circumstances and stage of development enabled them to provide responsive care tailored to individual needs. Children were cared for in a nurturing environment where they felt valued, respected, and emotionally secure. The childminder maintained a calm and consistent approach throughout the day, which helped children to feel confident and settled within the service. As a result, children experienced positive wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging.

The childminder implemented a thoughtful and personalised settling-in and transition process for children and their families. Parents were offered opportunities to stay and play alongside their children while they settled into the service. This enabled them to build strong relationships with children and families from the outset and develop a clear understanding of each child's individual needs.

We found care plans in place for the children attending the service. These contained relevant and up-to-date information that supported the childminder to promote children's health, welfare, safety, and wellbeing. The care planning format reflected current best practice and aligned well with the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach. The childminder used the wellbeing indicators to assess, monitor, and plan for children's overall wellbeing and development. Information recorded along with children's progress was regularly reviewed along with parents identifying appropriate next steps. Parents confirmed that they felt consulted, informed and actively involved in decisions relating to their child's care and development.

Parents received a warm welcome into the service at both drop-off and collection times. The childminder used these opportunities effectively to engage with families and share information about children's experiences, wellbeing, and development. This approach reflected the principles outlined within best practice guidance *Me; My Family and My Child Care Setting* and demonstrated a strong commitment to partnership working. By encouraging parents into the setting, the childminder promoted open communication, built trusting relationships, and created regular opportunities for meaningful discussions about children's care and learning. This strengthened continuity between home and the childcare setting and helped children feel secure, valued, and supported. Daily interactions also enabled parents to contribute to their child's learning journey and fostered a collaborative approach that benefited children and families.

To further strengthen practice, we discussed reviewing medication permission forms to ensure they fully reflected current guidance within *Management of Medication in Day Care and Childminding Services*. Recording detailed information, including signs and symptoms, medication form and strength, would provide additional clarity and ensure documentation remained fully aligned with best practice.

The childminder supported children's sleep and rest in a flexible and responsive manner. She worked closely with parents to ensure sleep arrangements reflected children's individual needs and home routines. Children rested when needed or at times requested by parents, promoting continuity of care and supporting their emotional security, safety, and wellbeing. Discussions with the childminder demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of rest and sleep in supporting children's overall health and development.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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