



Childcare Inspection Report on

Esther Sowerby

Pontypridd



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Description of the service

Esther Sowerby registered as a child minder in June 2013 and can care for eight children under the age of 12 years, including her own children. She operates from her home in Pontypridd between the hours of 7am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Care is provided through the English language and the 'Active Offer' in relation to the Welsh language is not provided.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Children who attend this service have a strong and confident voice as they know that their needs and wishes will be met. The children take part in an excellent range of activities and experiences that further their development. The child minder is warm, caring and competent as she has many years' experience of working with children and has a secure knowledge of child development and child care issues. The knowledge and understanding that she has gained from her training and qualifications is reflected in the stimulating opportunities that she provides for the children in her care and the way in which she manages her business. The environment is clean, homely and well-maintained. There are a good range of toys and resources available for the children to play with. The child minder has developed excellent relationships with parents and the community.

2. Improvements

Since the last inspection, the child minder has continued to make changes and update her knowledge for the benefit of the children. For example, the living room has been redecorated to provide a bright, welcoming space in which children can play and relax and pebbles have been added to the garden borders to provide sensory play opportunities. The child minder has also attended various training courses to keep up her knowledge of issues relating to children.

The child minder enacted upon recommendations from the last inspection. Following the inspection, the child minder sent a copy of her child protection policy which had been updated to reflect her knowledge in relation to the 'Prevent Duty'.

3. Requirements and recommendations

We made recommendation to the child minder in respect of infection control procedures, the recording of maintenance checks, activities and attendance. These are detailed at the back of the report.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children benefit from an excellent range of play, learning and social opportunities that enable them to develop skills and make good friends with others. Children are very confident to express themselves and know that their requests will be met by the child minder. Children are enthusiastic to spend time with the child minder and are very happy and settled.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children are able to freely choose what they play with and fully participate in the planning of activities.

Children freely explored the toys and resources that they played with, such as the Peppa Pig figures and musical instruments. One young child enjoyed getting amongst all of the toys by climbing into the box so that they could clearly see the resources. The child minder responded quickly to children's visual cues that they were hungry and tired and either provided them with their snack and drink or took them out for a walk so that they could fall asleep, which was their preferred method of settling. Children fully participated in the planning of activities and provided their views about the places they would like to visit. A child's handwritten list, for example, detailed examples of places around the area that they could visit. Alongside this, they had noted positives for visiting them alongside drawbacks; Folly Farm was deemed to be too far away and too expensive to visit so the children had collectively decided to visit Cardiff Museum.

Children have a strong, confident voice.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

Children are very settled and form positive attachments.

Children showed that they were comfortable in their surroundings. Children displayed bonds of affection with the child minder as they felt comforted by the reassurance and cuddles that she gave them. On occasion, the child minder undertook activities with the children that enabled them to identify and discuss different feelings and emotions in order to help them process what they were feeling and to give them more emotional awareness. Overall children commented in the questionnaires that they felt safe, happy and valued and would speak to the child minder if they did not. One child said that they liked most, "*Playing with friends.*" Some of the parents commented how happy their children were to spend time at the service: "*Both my children love coming to Esther's, they moan if I pick them up instead,*" whilst another said that, "*Esther has worked hard with X to settle (them) and (they) struggled with separation,*" but "*now runs in happy, smiling, no tears.*"

Children develop warm relationships and feel at home in the child minder's company.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children are learning to share and co-operate.

The two young children generally played alone, which was typical for their age and stage of development. Children sustained interest in toys for a reasonable length of time before moving on to something else; this showed that children were learning to persevere and focus on activities which is an important part of their development. The children showed that they were learning to share; the child minder reminded them of the need to take turns to have specific toys and they responded positively to the suggestion.

Children interact appropriately.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children benefit from opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities and outings that interest them.

The children were engaged and interested in different forms of play, which included exploring the interactive toys and listening to Christmas songs. The younger child enjoyed the range of toys laid out for them and happily played on the floor or child minder's lap. Children enjoyed the activities that they took part in and the toys they use. Children had commented in their questionnaires that they enjoyed playing with construction blocks, trains, creative beads, play dough and playing outside.

Children very much enjoy their play and learning.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children develop a range of skills and have some opportunities to practise doing things independently.

Children had benefitted from various trips to places of local interest, such as the 'Gruffalo Park' at Caerphilly Mountain and Cardiff Museum which provided the children with opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding about the world and the local environment. Photos evidenced that the children were enjoying activities such as outdoor games and activities in the garden, craft activities and role play. Children benefitted from well planned activities that had been linked to areas of learning. For example, in relation to the theme 'looking after myself', children had visited an opticians and had role-played having their eyes tested and filled out forms for the 'optician'. Over the summer, children had participated in a wide range of activities based on countries from around the world which enabled them to learn about different cultures and geography.

Children were undertaking some tasks independently which was appropriate for their age such as feeding themselves.

Children make very good progress.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Children who attend this service benefit from a competent, caring and experienced child minder who is committed to providing a stimulating environment.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

The child minder follows safe practices and has policies in place to support children's health, safety and well-being.

A child protection policy was in place and the child minder knew of the procedures to follow if she had cause for concern, although she had not needed to make a referral to social services. The child minder had undertaken training on the 'Prevent' strategy but the policy did not reflect her duties in relation to this. We discussed safe procedures during outings and school runs and found that the child minder was aware of the correct safety procedures to follow when out with children. She had purchased hi-vis jackets for the children to wear on the school runs as a method to promote the children's safety. Her training on first aid, food hygiene and child protection was up-to-date. Accident records had been completed appropriately and parents had been asked to sign them. Fire drills had been practised monthly and recorded on a sheet although the exact date had not been noted. Whilst the child minder generally had good hygiene practices, we did not see handwashing encouraged before the children ate. The child minder had discussed personal safety with the children by referring to the NSPCC's 'Pants' resources which aims to raise awareness of saying 'No' to unwanted and inappropriate behaviour.

In the main, the child minder successfully promotes and follows good practice to keep children safe and healthy.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

The child minder is a positive role model for children.

During her interactions with the children, the child minder was warm and caring towards them. She helped to create a calm, friendly atmosphere by encouraging them to make choices about what they wanted to do and by making sure that they were happy and comfortable. A behaviour management policy was in place which outlined strategies to use with children to encourage good behaviour and how to manage poor behaviour. We discussed the importance of recording and tracking behaviour issues and the child minder discussed scenarios that involved managing children's behaviour. This showed that she is a skilful practitioner in terms of managing and handling children's behaviour.

The child minder manages children's interactions positively.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Children benefit from an experienced child minder who provides a range of stimulating activities to further their development and ensure that they have fun.

The child minder had a secure knowledge and understanding of child development and was well qualified having obtained a level 3 childcare qualification, in addition to her teaching qualification and experience. The child minder had examples of detailed activity plans which outlined clear learning intentions and evidenced a good understanding of the areas of learning. The child minder said that she generally did not plan the activities in such depth but did not keep a record of most of the activities she had undertaken with them. However, the child minder had many examples of photographs and detailed observation notes and development records which showed that the children regularly took part in a range of interesting activities that supported their all-round development. The child minder ensured that children were involved within the community as she often took them on walks to the local park and to local toddler and playgroups. We saw photographs of children enjoying activities both in her home and out on trips at various interesting locations.

The child minder successfully promotes children's play, learning and development as she provides an excellent range of opportunities.

3. Environment

Summary

Children benefit from a clean, homely environment that is well maintained by the child minder. There are a range of resources for children to play with to suit varying ages, tastes and interests. Most toys are easily accessible to the children.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Children are cared for in a safe and clean environment.

The door was locked to prevent access from unwanted visitors and a visitors' book was used to record when others visited the premises. The child minder had developed effective risk assessments for the areas of the house that were used for child minding purposes which outlined the control measures put in place to minimise the risk of hazards to children. Risk assessments had also been completed for outings to regular places that were visited. The premises were clean and very well maintained: records showed that a gas safety check had been undertaken; the child minder said that smoke alarms were tested regularly, although not recorded, and the fridge was regularly checked and cleaned. The child minder had been visited by the Food Hygiene Department of the local authority and had been provided with positive feedback about the standard of cleanliness.

The environment is appropriately safe.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

Children are cared for in a comfortable environment that is used flexibly.

The children had access to a good sized living/dining space, the kitchen and adjoining play space. These rooms were light, airy and provided plenty of room to play. The back room area had access to the garden so the children could free flow inside and out during the summer months. The garden area was paved so appropriate for play in all-weathers. A large dining table was available for the children to sit around to eat or to undertake craft or table top activities. Toys and resources were stored in the living room, the back room and also the toilet/utility area. Children had their own individual coloured handtowels which were labelled. Comfortable chairs were also available for the children to relax upon.

There is sufficient space and resources to meet the needs of the children.

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

The child minder has a good stock of toys and equipment which are suitable for the children's needs.

We saw that the children had access to an appropriate range of resources including dolls, Small World figures, interactive toys, coding toys, a castle, construction blocks, dressing up clothes and craft materials. There was also a 'tuff' tray which was filled with sensory

materials and items relating to Christmas, although this was changed regularly to suit the season or theme of the activities. The child minder said that she rotated toys to maintain the children's interests. The toys were in good condition and suitable for a range of ages. Many of the resources could be accessed easily by the children themselves. The child minder provided suitable seating that allowed the children to sit comfortably to complete table top activities and have their snacks.

The child minder consistently ensures that the equipment and resources are of good quality, clean and well-maintained.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

The child minder has a secure knowledge of the regulations and national minimum standards. She is dedicated to developing professionally and to managing a successful child care business.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

The child minder has a clear vision to create a stimulating, home-from-home child-led service. She diligently ensures that she complies with the regulations and national minimum standards.

The child minder had a statement of purpose that reflected the service that she provided and a detailed operational plan which outlined how the service was run. The child minder had successfully created a positive, child-focused environment which encouraged the children's interests and provided opportunities for them to take part in an extensive range of activities, outings and experiences. The child minder had dated her policies to show when she had reviewed them and said that she signposted parents to her website to view the most current policies. The child minder had current public liability insurance, business cover on her car insurance and had registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), as a handler of personal data. The child minder had set up a support group on Facebook for other child minders and provided support and guidance for others in the profession.

Leadership at this service is effective.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

The child minder has developed a system for reviewing and improving the service that she provides.

The child minder had completed the Care Inspectorate Wales' (CIW) self-assessment of service statement (SASS) and had undertaken an annual quality of care review. Parents had provided feedback via questionnaires and there had been a good response rate. Parents said during this process that they appreciated communicating via 'WhatsApp', the daily diary they were given and communication via email and text. The report evidenced a great deal that the childminder had done with the children and that she has high expectations for her childcare business. The child minder had considered areas for improvement, but stated that she felt that no specific action/improvements could be made. As part of her review process, the child minder had considered each national minimum standard and had made notes about her practice or what she had changed over the course of the year in relation to them. She had linked this with her policies and other documents. This showed that she had a secure knowledge about the childcare standards and how her service either met or exceeded them.

The child minder effectively reflects on the service that she provides.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

The child minder undertakes training in order to develop professionally.

Recent training included courses on, 'Prevent' strategy training. Since the last inspection, the child minder had obtained a childcare qualification to provide a secure understanding of childcare and early child development.

Her household members over the age of 16 years all held a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. These were due for renewal in the following few months. The child minder's attendance register showed that she was keeping within her registered numbers of looking after no more than 8 children at any one time.

The weekly attendance was displayed on the door and included block times booked. Parents signed the sheets when they collected the children. We discussed the importance of ensuring that the times were amended if children arrived or were collected earlier/later so as to be accurate.

Overall, the child minder successfully manages her time and resources.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

Parents are kept informed about their children's wellbeing and progress.

A settling-in period was offered to children to allow them the opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with the child minder and her home. The child minder said that she provided parents with information to help them make an informed choice about using the service with access to Facebook and her website, and that they were given verbal feedback when they collected their child. The child minder used a daily diary for younger children under 3 years, which included information about where the child had been, what they did, what they had eaten and other general comments about their well-being. The child minder said that she used 'WhatsApp' to message parents individually that she used to show photographs of the children involved in different activities on a weekly basis, email and text message to communicate. The child minder had developed links in the community through regular visits to local playgroups and the library. One parent commented in the inspection questionnaire that, "*I trust her completely to care for (my child) as I would (or better!)*"

Partnerships at this service are particularly strong.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non-compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

We recommended that:

- tighten up on handwashing as per the guidance in relation to 'infection control procedures;
- keep a record or further evidence of the range of day-to-day activities that the children participate in;
- record when smoke alarms are tested; and
- ensure that the attendance register consistently reflects the children's actual time of arrival and departure.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections.

One inspector carried out a visit to the service on 13 December 2018, lasting three hours;

- we had discussions with the child minder about her service. Questionnaires were provided to the child minder for parents to complete;
- we observed the children and the care which they received. Questionnaires were left for older children to complete;
- we looked at a wide range of records and documents including children's registers, children's records, the child minder's policies, safety records, the statement of purpose;
- we inspected the premises; and
- gave verbal feedback to the child minder over the phone on our findings from the inspection.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website:

www.careinspectorate.wales

About the service

Type of care provided	Child Minder
Registered Person	Esther Sowerby
Registered maximum number of places	8
Age range of children	0 to 12 years
Opening hours	7am to 6pm, Monday to Friday
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	20 April 2015
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	13 December 2018
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of children who use or intend to use their service. We recommend that the child minder considers Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words' strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care.
Additional Information:	