



Childcare Inspection Report on

Nicola Francis

Pontypool



Date of Publication

18 January 2019

Welsh Government © Crown copyright 2019.

You may use and re-use the information featured in this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government License. You can view the Open Government License, on the National Archives website or you can write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk
You must reproduce our material accurately and not use it in a misleading context.

Description of the service

The child minder was registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in 2013 to provide home based child care for up to ten children under 12 years old. Her service is available from Monday to Friday including some school holidays by negotiation with parents. She lives on the outskirts of Pontypool and provides an English language service where the Welsh language is supported through some resources and activities.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

The child minder uses her child care qualifications and experience to place children's care at the centre of her service. She gives children choice in the activities she provides, and encourages them to share their views and do things for themselves. She knows the children well and ensures they have fun, learn and develop through their play. Children benefit from a healthy lifestyle and praise and affection are freely given. The child minder's home is very well maintained, safe and secure. The children are cared for in a comfortable, family environment with access to lots of appropriate resources. The child minder keeps effective policies and procedures. She keeps her training up to date and takes up opportunities for learning to support her professional role.

2. Improvements

Children's experiences are enhanced because the child minder has completed a level three child care qualification and applies her additional knowledge and understanding to her service. In addition she has designed and recently improved play spaces indoors and outside for children's use and enjoyment.

3. Requirements and recommendations

The child minder is meeting her legal responsibility and overall is providing a good child care service with some areas of excellent practice. We made some recommendations to develop the service and improve outcomes for children including some revision to paperwork.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children's views are valued by the child minder and they are able to influence their activities. Children feel welcomed, very much at home and have formed good relationships with the child minder and each other. They are able to develop their self-help skills and undertake activities which build their confidence and self-esteem. Children enjoy an excellent variety of activities at the child minder's home and can spend time outside throughout the year.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children can make choices and they are encouraged to express their views. Play is mostly child-led and we observed all children helping themselves to toys and activities. Younger children were chatty, asking for a story or a particular activity, such as looking through a storage box of craft resources. They then decided to use them to make a picture using paint and a range of stickers. Older children told us the best things about being here included playing with the child minder's son, various games and reading; especially a dragon story.

Children are listened to by the child minder and are able to make choices within the activities she provides.

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

Children are settled and comfortable in their care because the child minder knows them well and has developed good bonds of affection with them. They arrived after school chatting and laughing with each other, quickly making themselves at home. We observed a tired younger child snuggle up to the child minder in the book area for a quiet story. We saw a display space that is called the 'work we're proud of wall' acknowledging children's achievements. We spoke to older children who were very happy to tell us about the house rules and who they might talk to in the event they had a concern while in the child minder's care. It was clear that the subject had already been discussed by the children with the child minder and that their parents were aware.

Children feel secure and comfortable in their care with a child minder who creates a relaxed, family-style environment.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children interact very well in this service. We observed them chatting, laughing and playing together, happily involving the child minder's two sons in their activities. They sat together in their cushioned book area, chatting and easy in the company. They took turns to tell us about their time here, laughing as they told us about the sweet treats they have on Fridays

after school. An older child played with a robotic toy, including a younger child in their game. Children played confidently on their own, either with a computer game, or following their imagination with small world toys, creating stories and private conversations with them.

Children's emotional security and wellbeing are enhanced by the positive relationships encouraged by the child minder.

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

Children are able to enjoy a variety of play based activities which suit their interests and are appropriate to their age and stage of development. We observed a younger child absorbed in a story, enjoying the individual characters' voices and props used by the child minder. The older children were boisterous and cheerful in their play on arrival from school, eager to choose an activity, relax and eat their snack. A young child exclaimed "Aaahhh!" when they were given a large piece of paper for their painting, excited to make a start. They happily contributed to a counting activity, when they were encouraged to use Welsh as well as English.

Children enjoy a good range of play and learning experiences with the child minder who recognises the importance of children's play opportunities for their overall development.

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

Children are familiar with their surroundings and know where things are. Resources are organised so that they can mostly help themselves and be independent in their play. We observed children were encouraged to help tidy toys away at the change of an activity and saw they were confident to indicate if they wanted something. Younger children are given support to learn to manage their own personal needs and encouraged to do things for themselves, such as putting on their own shoes. They are able to develop concentration skills in focused activities such as a construction activity and shape sorting with appropriate support from the child minder. We observed that the child minder supervised children in a non-intrusive manner as they used different resources and play spaces, enabling them to feel trusted and take appropriate responsibility.

Children develop confidence and independence with a child minder who encourages children to do things for themselves and gives them time to carry out their chosen activities.

2. Care and Development

Summary

The child minder uses her level three child care qualification and experience caring for children to inform her practice and applies a 'home from home' approach to her service. The child minder is able to identify children at risk and has the confidence to follow appropriate safeguarding procedures. She treats children with warmth and respect and follows good hygiene routines. The child minder has realistic expectations of children and is able to plan for their individual needs effectively. She provides activities in her home and in the local area that she knows the children will engage with and will promote their learning and development.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

The child minder keeps a clean and safe home. She is experienced in her role and has good procedures in place for keeping children safe and healthy. She renews the Disclosure and Barring Service Certificates for herself and household members over the age of 16 as necessary. The child minder knows what action to take in the event of a safeguarding situation. She keeps up to date with training and is aware of recent developments regarding her responsibilities under 'Prevent' legislation. The child minder is also up to date with Paediatric First Aid training. Fire drills are practised regularly and are logged appropriately, and monthly checks of the smoke detectors are recorded. There is an effective fire evacuation plan and procedure in place. We looked at the accident, incident and medication recording systems, which were all in place and the child minder was clear about what action to take in the event of an emergency. The child minder serves food provided by parents of younger children but provides a range of snacks after school for all children, taking account of any individual dietary requirements, although there is not a healthy eating policy and procedure in place. We observed good, hygienic systems routinely in place. The child minder told us about an activity she carried out with the children using three pieces of bread that had been handled with clean and less clean hands to show how bacteria grows when hands are not washed. Children's health and well-being is promoted, including regular outdoor activities.

The child minder promotes children's good health and welfare.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Children are clear about what is and is not, acceptable because the child minder applies a consistent approach. She takes into account the age, stage of development and needs of each child, reflecting her policy and procedure for managing behaviour. It includes the 'house rules' which older children are familiar with. We observed the child minder was calm,

clear, kindly and firm, explaining things to a younger child, enabling them to learn to 'make good choices' and manage what might be difficult feelings.

The child minder sets and holds realistic expectations of children's behaviour and celebrates their achievements.

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

The child minder provides care which is child centred and meets children's individual needs in a cheerful and caring atmosphere. She keeps an extensive range of toys, activities and resources that are suitable for the children who attend. This is an English speaking service while there are books and activities that promote the Welsh language. Children follow seasonal themed activities including some multicultural celebrations. The child minder told us about her weekly routine in which care is provided on a part time basis to suit the needs of several families. Mornings may be spent at a soft play centre, attending a Welsh class, or local parent and toddler groups where children enjoy sociable activities and messy play. Some young children are currently taking part in settling-in arrangements and weekly routines are adjusted to suit them and other children's sleep, rest and school needs. Afternoons may be spent in free play or focused activities such as craft or cooking. Observations and activity planning take place informally for all children who are in school or attending nursery. The child minder is considering how best to develop an effective system to observe children's progress and plan for next steps in play and learning for the under threes who are currently starting at the service. Attendance records showed that the child minder keeps the number of children she cares for at any time low, so that she can be confident about the attention she gives them.

Children's play and learning are promoted by the child minder who has skills and knowledge to meet their individual needs.

3. Environment

Summary

The child minder ensures that her home is safe, secure and child friendly. Children are given a good range of resources and experiences that support and enhance their learning and development. The child minder provides an excellent environment in which children can play, learn and relax safely and she takes steps to minimise risks to children.

Our findings

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

Children are looked after in a safe, clean and secure environment and the child minder carries out regular recorded risk assessments and cleaning routines, including a daily visual check throughout the play space. We were told that daily cleaning takes place, and regular deeper cleans are planned and carried out. The front door was kept locked during the inspection and the garden access was kept secure. We saw the first aid kit and a fire blanket were easily available. A record of accidents was kept, which showed that only minor accidents had occurred and had been dealt with appropriately. However parents had not signed all entries relating to their child. Toilet and hand wash facilities were on the ground floor, and were appropriately kept and children can use them independently. The child minder maintained relevant insurances and the annual gas safety certificate for her home. We saw that all certificates relating to building regulations for the recent refurbishments to the play spaces were in place. The child minder is currently developing a policy and procedure to cover children's access to, and use of, the internet, mobile phones or computer games. She had taken account of recent developments in regulations about data protection and was clear about how she keeps and shares information securely. The child minder keeps an effective set of risk assessments for her service.

The child minder is clear about her responsibility for maintaining a safe environment for children.

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

The child minder's home is welcoming and furnished comfortably, enabling children to relax, play and do many things for themselves. Children have full access to the ground floor area of the house, although there is a designated play room. This enables the child minder to be closely attentive of younger children while older children can use other areas with some independence. The garden has been arranged to provide some challenging play opportunities on a large climbing tower for older children, and a covered all-year play and learning space where children of all ages can experience messy play activities or sit and relax in the fixed seating area. There is also an outdoor heater available for use if needed. Younger children have their own safe outdoor play space providing a playhouse with an Astro turfed surface. This arrangement ensures children's needs can be met safely if and

when a mixed age range of children attend. Indoors, children were able to help themselves to toys and activities from the storage boxes or those left out, such as vehicles, construction toys, books, small world and lots of role play resources. There were lots of board games and a play station for older children to enjoy, including a television and collection of age appropriate DVDs. We also saw home-made bunting re-enforcing Welsh words, a display showing which children's birthdays were in each month of the year and a range of story sacks to support children's enjoyment in their learning. Before and after school care is provided and the child minder told us that while she may prepare some craft activities for children after school, they usually choose to relax with each other, with games or television. She keeps some resources stored separately, rotating their use to meet the needs of children and support planned themes and activities.

Children are cared for in a home from home environment where the child minder has placed excellent play and learning opportunities as a high priority.

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

Children have easy access to furniture, equipment and a good range of toys and materials that are kept in good condition and meet children's needs. The child minder checks the toys and equipment daily and more formally within the annual written risk assessment. We were told that toys and resources were also checked for wear and tear as they were used, or tidied away. Deep cleaning of all toys and play space is planned and carried out regularly.

The child minder maintains good routines to ensure resources are suitable for children's use.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

The child minder runs her service so that it meets the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care (NMS) and relevant regulations. She is organised and keeps her paperwork in a clear and accessible system, although we recommended some revisions to some policies and procedures. Parents are given the information they need to make an informed choice about using the service. The child minder has a level three child care qualification, several years' practical experience, keeps her training up to date and has undertaken additional training to ensure that experiences for children are positive. She provides a good, improving service, sets up ways to reflect on her practice and includes parents and children's views in the process.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

The child minder manages her service effectively. We looked at the child minder's statement of purpose and her comprehensive set of policies and procedures and found that overall they are appropriate and she confirmed that she shares them with parents. We made some recommendations for developing a healthy eating policy and procedure and revision to the complaints procedure and behaviour policy and procedure. The child minder has attended additional training such as ASD awareness.

The child minder delivers a consistent and improving standard of care to children.

4.2 How effective is self-evaluation and planning for improvement?

Children's outcomes are enhanced because the child minder takes a reflective approach to operating her service. She reviews her service annually and we looked at the preparation she has made for completing her review for the current year. We saw previous reviews in which parents had spoken very highly of the service they and their children received. The child minder told us about changes she had made to suit individual families' needs where practicable. She told us that she had asked children to give her ideas about new resources, and had sometimes taken older children shopping with her so they can help choose and understand about budget keeping. The child minder has taken up training opportunities through the local authority which help her improve her understanding and practice, in addition to the level three qualifications she achieved in the past year. She told us she is keen to develop her use of the Welsh language and tries to join a local children's class along with minded children. Her forward planning includes undertaking more formal Welsh lessons and developing policy and procedures for healthy eating and ICT.

The child minder reflects on her service and takes steps to improve it.

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

The child minder ensures that children's needs are met by setting clearly defined roles and responsibilities for herself and anyone who may be on the premises during child minding hours. We observed that minded children were relaxed and comfortable when the child minder's husband and two sons were also present during the inspection. The child minder told us a child had enjoyed the experience of a local hill walk she had taken them on with her husband and their new dog. The puppy is accessible to children only on agreement with parents and the children themselves and a pet policy is in place. A younger child asked several times to show how the puppy does tricks, which they were able to help with before they went home, receiving praise for being patient. The child gave the dog commands and treats for performing the tricks such as 'sit' and 'roll over', clearly enjoying the responsibility of the task. They were gently prompted to wash their hands after handling the dog.

Arrangements for household members who may be present and resources are effective and ensure the smooth-running of the service.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

The child minder works closely with parents to ensure their children's needs are met. The child minder provides them with the information needed to make informed choices about their child's care. Discussion with her showed that she knows the children and their families well and she has cared for a number of children and their younger siblings over a number of years. She described the settling-in process for parents and children which takes place over short visits and extended as needed until the contracted arrangements can begin. There was a chatty and informative hand over to parents as children were collected. We spoke to parents who told us their child *"Never wants to leave. It's a home from home, and calls her Auntie Nic"* Parents used terms such as *"Fantastic; can't fault it"* and *"Amazing; brilliant"* to describe the service they receive and said how they had been recommended the service by other parents who used it.

The child minder understands the importance of working in partnership to ensure that children receive the support they need.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

In order to develop the service and improve outcomes for children we discussed the following matters with the child minder:

- Revise the behaviour policy and procedure to include a statement to say that CIW will be informed of any changes to it within 28 days;
- revise the complaints procedure to include a statement that parents of a child sponsored by the Local Authority can use the Local Authority's complaints procedure; clarify the action to take in the event of a concurrent investigation and include CIW's full contact details;
- develop a complaints procedure that older children may use;
- develop a healthy eating policy and procedure;
- ensure parents sign all relevant entries in the accident records;
- complete the development of the policy and procedure to cover children's access to, and use of, the internet, mobile phones or computer games; and
- complete the development of the system to use recorded observations of children to identify specific activity plans to support next steps in their play and learning.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This inspection was announced at very short notice and undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. The inspector undertook two visits to the service on one day of approximately two and three hours. We gave feedback of our findings to the child minder at the end of the visit. There were five children between the ages of four and eight years of age present during the inspection. Evidence for the report was gathered using the following methodology:

- We looked at the range of paperwork the child minder keeps about her service – including policies and procedures, risk assessments, contracts, children’s records, accident records and safety certificates;
- we observed the children interacting with the child minder and her family and choosing their activities;
- we spoke with children; and
- we spoke with the child minder about how she runs her service and her plans for the future.

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	Nicola Francis
Registered maximum number of places	10
Age range of children	Under 12 years of age
Opening hours	8.00 – 17.45 x five days a week including school holidays
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	12 June 2015
Dates of this inspection visit	20 November 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 is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of people /children who use, or intend to use their service. We recommend that the service provider considers Welsh Government's ' <i>More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care</i> '.
Additional Information:	