



# Childcare Inspection Report on

**Audrey Whitcombe**

**Ebbw Vale**



**Date of Publication**

**Manually Insert Date**

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## **Description of the service**

The child minder is registered with CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) to provide home based childcare for up to four children under 12 years of age. She operates her service from her home close to Ebbw Vale town centre. Child minding takes place mainly on the ground floor, with easy access for the children to a small, enclosed patio area. This is an English language setting.

## **Summary of our findings**

### **1. Overall assessment**

Children are happy and relaxed at the service. They have formed good relationships with the child minder and her family and are valued and well supported. The child minder promotes children's safety and health appropriately. The child minder works closely and flexibly with parents and other professionals to provide an improving and reliable service. Overall, the service is well run in line with the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and relevant regulations.

### **2. Improvements**

- The child minder has recently attended training in observations and assessment of children's play, and as a result, is developing suitable systems to help her identify the next steps in their learning and plan appropriate activities to promote these.
- She has refreshed her training in paediatric first aid and safeguarding.

### **3. Requirements and recommendations**

There are no issues of non-compliance following this inspection. We noted some additional information needs to be included in the child protection and concerns policies to provide clarity for parents. We recommended individual hand towels are provided in the bathroom to minimise the risk of cross infection, and a record is kept of allergens in the food provided. These recommendations are discussed further in the body of the report.

# 1. Well-being

## Summary

Children enjoy their time with the child minder. They have formed good relationships with her and her family, and feel valued, confident and relaxed in her care. They are happy to follow their interests and are developing their self-help skills well.

## Our findings

### 1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children are able to make suitable choices. They happily choose where they would like to play and what they would like to do, such as role play using the 'duster' or playing 'peek-a-boo' with the child minder from behind the sofa. They are confident to express their ideas such as what they would like to eat, and can make decisions about their care, for example, when and where they sleep.

Children are confident to express themselves and determine the content of their play.

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

Children have forged very positive relationships with the child minder and her family. They feel personally valued by the child minder. For example, they love to play with toys bought for them by the child minder for their birthdays such as a tea set. They laugh and smile with the child minder and engage her in their play. They enjoy lots of individual attention which helps them feel appreciated, and go off to sleep very easily which shows they are relaxed and comfortable in the child minder's care. Previous children still visit the child minder which demonstrates how much they felt valued and supported. One parent commented in their questionnaire returned to the child minder: *"Our [child] liked her from the first day"*.

Children are relaxed, happy and settled with the child minder.

### 1.3 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children enjoy their play at the child minder's home and out and about. They engage in the good range of activities available to them which help promote their learning successfully. At the child minder's home they enjoy, for example, play dough, role play and water play out on the patio. Out and about, they enjoy visits to local parks to play cricket or with the parachute for example, and often travel to Cardiff on the train. One child wrote in a letter to the child minder that they *"like going to [the child minders] because she cooks me spag bol. I like going to the library and look at the books with her."* One parent commented in their questionnaire for the child minder: *"Our child loves to play and spend time under the child minder's care."*

Children enjoy their learning through varied and age appropriate play opportunities.

#### **1.4 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?**

Children are developing their independence appropriately. They are learning to recognise and put on their own coats and shoes, and can happily find the resources they wish to play with. They are encouraged to manage their own personal needs, with good support if needed, and successfully enjoy their meals and snacks with good levels of self-reliance.

Children are developing their self-help skills suitably, in line with their age and stage of development.

## **2. Care and Development**

### **Summary**

The child minder promotes children's welfare, safety, and health effectively. She provides suitable activities in line with their age and interests, and helps them feel valued and secure.

### **Our findings**

#### **2.1 How well does the child minder keep children safe and healthy?**

The child minder keeps children safe and healthy. She is clear of her role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children, and is aware of the appropriate procedures to follow to protect children's health in relation to food storage and preparation. Parents generally provide their child's meals whilst the child minder offers healthy snacks such as toast or fruit. She is mindful of children's specific dietary needs and allergies. However, allergens in the food provided are not recorded. She supports children well to follow good personal hygiene practices. However, individual hand towels are not always provided to minimise the possibility of cross-infection.

The child minder is clear about the appropriate procedures to follow in relation to the administration of medication, or in the event of an accident/incident. Paediatric first aid is up to date so the child minder can respond appropriately to minor accidents. There is a suitable fire evacuation plan in place, and the child minder practises drills with the children so they would know what to do if they needed to evacuate the house quickly. The child minder recognises the importance of outdoor play. She takes children to local parks and play areas regularly, and frequently walks with them to local places such as shops and the library. She takes appropriate steps to ensure they are safe when out and about, and uses suitable car seats when in the car.

The child minder implements the appropriate measures, and plans suitable activities so children are safe and healthy.

#### **2.2 How well does the child minder manage interactions?**

The child minder has a very calm and patient manner with the children and promotes positive behaviour through appropriate strategies. She told us most unwanted behaviour typical of younger children is managed through distraction and simple and clear explanations. Lots of praise and encouragement is given to support and promote positive interactions and children's self-esteem. The atmosphere is happy and relaxed. The behaviour management policy is clear and shared with parents. However, it does not make reference to how the child minder would deal with bullying.

The child minder encourages positive interactions successfully.

### **2.3 How well does the child minder promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?**

The child minder is very experienced and knows the children well. She encourages parents to bring their children for settling in days before they start at the service, and seeks valuable information about each child, such as how they prefer to sleep and their favourite activities. This helps them get to know each other, and enables the child minder to plan suitable care. The child minder is relaxed and calm with the children and provides responsive and nurturing care. She observes children's play to help her plan activities she knows they will enjoy and will promote their learning and development such as messy play, crafts and trips into the community. She regularly meets up with another child minder and attends parent and toddler groups to help children develop their social skills. She has begun to formalise her observations and assessment of children's play so she can monitor their progress, share this with parents, and plan the next steps in their learning as effectively as possible. The child minder uses incidental Welsh with the children to promote their learning of the Welsh language. When caring for children whose first language is not English, the child minder ensures she uses some words which are familiar to them to help promote their confidence and sense of security. One parent commented in their questionnaire: *"[The child minder] has a fantastic approach to children, which has an amazing effect on the development of our daughter"*.

The child minder understands children's individual needs and promotes their play and learning well.

### **3. Environment**

#### **Summary**

Children benefit from a homely and welcoming environment. They can easily access a suitable range of good quality play resources which meet their interests. The child minder ensures the home is safe and well maintained.

#### **Our findings**

##### **3.1 How well does the child minder ensure the safety of the environment?**

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. The child minder identifies hazards within her home and garden, and has appropriate safety measures in place to mitigate risks. For example, the front door is kept locked whilst the children are in her home, and the front gate has been adjusted so children cannot access the road in front of the house. The back garden is enclosed and the child minder makes sure children are unable to access the steps. There are records of general maintenance being carried out, including the gas boiler check, which show the house is safe.

The child minder ensures her home and garden are safe.

##### **3.2 How well does the child minder ensure the suitability of the environment?**

The child minder's home is comfortable, clean and welcoming. Child minding takes place mainly on the ground floor; children only use the upstairs to access the bathroom. They use the kitchen and living/dining room to play. There is suitable space for them to enjoy floor play and tables for meals and messy play. The living area has plenty of space for children to relax or sleep. Toys and resources are set out before children arrive or stored in easily accessible crates so it is easy for children to help themselves to what they want to play with. There is easy access to a small patio where the child minder said children enjoy, for example, their snacks or water play in better weather.

The environment is suited to children's needs, and is welcoming and homely.

##### **3.3 How well does the child minder ensure the quality of resources and equipment?**

Children have access to a suitable range of good quality resources and equipment that meet their needs appropriately. The child minder regularly rotates these to maintain children's interest, and provides additional resources as their interests change. There is comfortable furniture in the living room for children to relax, and tables and chairs in the kitchen and dining room for them to enjoy their meals and some of their activities. Outdoor resources such as sand trays and tables and chairs are available, and stored appropriately so they remain in good condition.



The child minder provides appropriate resources and suitable furniture to meet the interests and needs of the children attending.

## **4. Leadership and Management**

### **Summary**

Overall parents and children benefit from a suitably run and appropriately managed setting. Paperwork is well organised and parents can be clear about how the service operates. The child minder is keen to develop the service to improve outcomes for children. However, systems to review the quality of care need to be more robust.

### **Our findings**

#### **4.1 How effective is leadership?**

Overall, the service is well run and managed. The child minder enjoys her role. She promotes safe practices and creates an environment where children and their parents feel valued. The child minder ensures all mandatory training is up-to-date and overall, records are maintained in line with the National Minimum Standards and regulations. The statement of purpose gives an accurate picture of the service, and policies and procedures are suitable so parents can generally be clear about how the service operates. However, the complaint, child protection and behaviour management policy require some additional information to provide further clarity to parents. Relevant policies are shared with parents, suitable contracts are agreed, and appropriate permissions are sought for activities such as taking their children on local walks and seeking emergency medical treatment. The child minder values the views of parents and children and is keen to develop her service to improve outcomes for children, through for example attending relevant training. However a quality of care report had not been provided since July 2017. This was addressed immediately following the inspection.

The service is generally well organised and managed efficiently.

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

The child minder is motivated to provide a reliable service which meets children's and parents' needs. She welcomes their views and provides resources and activities which follow the children's interests and preferences. The child minder undertakes appropriate training to ensure she is up-to-date with current practice in relation to safeguarding, food hygiene and paediatric first aid, and updates relevant policies as required. She welcomes the support of the local authority and acts on their advice and guidance to improve outcomes for children. She has acted on the recommendations from the previous inspection and was keen to address the recommendations made during this visit. However, the child minder had not undertaken a formal review of the quality of her care since July 2017. This was addressed immediately following the inspection. There is a complaint policy in place and the child minder has not received any concerns about her service. However, the policy requires some additional information.

The child minder welcomes views of parents, children and external agencies to bring about improvements, although systems to review the quality of care provided are not sufficiently robust.

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

The child minder is appropriately qualified and has many years' experience working with children. She makes sure herself and her husband have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to ensure their suitability. She has appropriate contingency plans in place in the event of an emergency, which are shared with parents. The child minder regularly works in partnership with the child minder she uses as her emergency back-up person to extend the children's opportunities to develop their social skills and enjoy wider experiences. This also means children would be familiar with this child minder in the event of an emergency, and so reduce any anxiety an event of this nature may cause them. The child minder works as flexibly as possible to accommodate parents' needs and gives good notice of any leave required so they may make suitable alternative arrangements.

The child minder has effective systems in place to ensure a safe and reliable service to parents.

#### **4.4 How effective are partnerships?**

The child minder works closely with parents to promote their child's well-being. She seeks good information about each child before they start at her service so she can provide appropriate care, and shares policies and procedures with parents so they are clear about what to expect. The child minder shares information verbally with parents at drop off and collection times about their child's experiences and routines. She also spends time with the families at their homes where possible so she can get to know them well, and provide effective support for their child. We discussed developing the use of individual diaries in future for younger children, particularly for children under the age of two years. The child minder has built up good relationships with the local authority through which she accesses advice and training. She attends groups such as parent and toddler sessions within the local community, which serve to extend children's play and learning opportunities.

There are good communication systems in place with parents, and the child minder understands the importance of working in close partnership with them and the wider community to promote children's well-being and development.

## **5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection**

### **5.1 Areas of non-compliance from previous inspections**

None

### **5.2 Areas of non-compliance from this inspection**

None

### **5.3 Recommendations for improvement**

- Provide children with individual hand towels to minimise the risk of cross-infection;
- record allergens in the food provided;
- include information about how bullying is managed in the behaviour management policy, and forward a copy of the updated version to CIW, and
- include information regarding how concerns subject to concurrent investigation are managed and how CIW manage concerns regarding child care providers in the complaint policy, and include information about Prevent Duty in the child protection policy.

## 6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection looking at all aspects of the service, undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. We used the following methods to gather evidence for this report:

- We looked at what we already knew about the service;
- the inspection was carried out by one inspector over one morning;
- we observed activities and interactions between the child minder and children present;
- we looked at a range of records and documents including contracts, the statement of purpose, children's records, records of attendance and policies and procedures;
- we viewed the parts of the premises used for child minding and looked at the safety measures in place;
- we took account of the comments made in one parent questionnaire and one child questionnaire received by the child minder, and two CIW parent questionnaires returned to us following the inspection.
- we spoke with the child minder about how she ran the service and her plans for the future, and
- our findings were fed back to the child minder following the inspection.

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

[www.careinspectorate.wales](http://www.careinspectorate.wales)



## 7. About the service

Type of care provided	Child Minder
Registered Person	Audrey Whitcombe
Registered maximum number of places	4
Age range of children	Birth up to 12 years
Opening hours	7am to 7pm, weekdays, but is as flexible as possible to accommodate parents' needs
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	10 August 2015
Dates of this inspection visit	25 March 2019
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 More 'Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'.
Additional Information: None	

No noncompliance records found in Open status.