



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Childcare Inspection Report on

Helena Kowalewska

Cardiff



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Description of the service

The child minder was registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in 2004. She provides home based child care for up to six children under 12 years old. She operates from Monday to Friday in term time only, providing a flexible service for families. She lives in her family home in Cardiff. The child minder is a fluent Polish speaker, providing an English language service where the Welsh language is supported and encouraged through activities.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

The child minder has many years' experience in caring for children and places their 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 with her while focusing on their learning and development. Children benefit from a healthy lifestyle and affection is freely given. The child minder's home is well maintained, safe and secure. The children are cared for in a comfortable, child friendly environment, with access to an excellent range of experiences and resources. The child minder keeps effective policies and procedures. She keeps her training up to date and seeks out additional opportunities for learning to further develop her professional role.

2. Improvements

No recommendations were made at the last inspection. The child minder has undertaken an impressive range of training courses which have enhanced the quality of her service. She has improved how she observes and records children's developments and provides activities as a result. We were told that there had been no significant changes to the environment, although the child minder has replaced and added to the resources for children's use, responding to children's interests and in keeping with her regular risk assessments.

3. Requirements and recommendations

The child minder is meeting her legal responsibility in providing a safe child care service. We made some recommendations to develop the service and improve outcomes for children including some very minor 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 are made to feel welcome and at home and have formed good relationships with the child minder. 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 both at the child minder's home and in the community, and they spend lots of time outside.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children can make choices and express their views. We observed a flow of conversation between the child and child minder, where they were encouraged to describe and name the birds seen on walks and in the garden. We saw a child easily helping themselves to toys and games from the range available in the main play space. They also spent some time exploring the garden, where they eventually decided to play with the sand. At snack time, the child selected which fruit they wanted to use to make their kebab and there was some discussion about which were their favourite fruits. The child minder told us that the child's natural interest in birds had prompted her to buy a poster which helps them identify birds together.

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

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

Children are relaxed in the care of the child minder, who knows them well. We observed lots of praise and encouragement as well as spontaneous hugs. We noted that while children received considerable focussed attention from the child minder, they were also comfortable spending time following their own interests and games, with no unnecessary intervention by the child minder. We were told that when a child who had been at home for the school holidays, returned to the child minder's care, they told her "*When I didn't see you, I missed you*".

Children feel secure and comfortable with a child minder who provides a relaxed approach to her service.

1.3 How well do children interact?

We are unable to comment on this topic from observation. The child minder is currently caring for one pre-school child only, having attended since they were a few months old. We were told that children's sociable experiences with their peers are arranged regularly throughout the week.

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

Children are able to enjoy an excellent variety of activities which suit their interests and their age and stage of development. We observed that children's natural curiosity is encouraged and a child told us about the dinosaur nest they had made when dinosaurs were their favourite thing. A child enjoyed telling the child minder what they could see in pictures, and proudly identified letters of the alphabet and named the object on the card, as part of their pre-reading games. They were happy to help count and name colours in English and Welsh throughout their play. We were told that a current favourite is the bubble machine. We observed a child making a bird feeder from re-cycled items, which they filled with seeds - using a spoon which tested their dexterity - and they decorated it with stickers.

Children enjoy an excellent 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 confident in their surroundings, helping themselves to toys, activities and resources. They know where things are and resources are organised so that older children can mostly help themselves and be independent in their play. We saw they were confident to ask for specific items if they wanted something that was not already set out, such as a colouring activity. They were able to move freely around the play space, and were comfortable 'getting on with their game'. Children are encouraged to solve problems for themselves during their activities, such as when making the birdfeeder, a child said "*We need to make a hole in it so the birds can come and eat*". We observed a child put on their own coat and wellies for outdoor play, removing them when they returned inside. They showed a good level of independence at meal time, making their wraps with chicken and serving themselves sweetcorn. They made fruit kebabs, and used a metal knife and fork. They poured their own drink from a small jug into their ceramic cup, and were polite, saying please and thank you as appropriate. They were praised by the child minder with comments such as "*Thank you for your help*". A child decided they wanted to use the pushchair for the walk to nursery and cheerfully sat in it ready for the journey, clipping themselves in safely.

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 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 carries out appropriate hygiene routines. The child minder has high but also realistic expectations of children and is able to plan for their individual needs effectively. She provides interesting 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 suitable procedures in place for keeping children safe and healthy. She renews the Disclosure and Barring Service Certificates for herself, her partner, and daughter who has now turned sixteen years of age, as necessary. The child minder knows what action to take in the event of a safeguarding situation and keeps up to date with training. We looked at her safeguarding policy and noted that it includes a statement about the Prevent Duty 2015, which is a new responsibility to prevent children who attend child care settings from being drawn into extremism. The child minder is up to date with Paediatric First Aid training, has updated her training on food hygiene and child protection. Fire drills are practised regularly and are logged appropriately. 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 provides all food for the children, keeping a varied and healthy menu. Snacks include spinach or seeded wraps with cheese and ham, and fruit. Main meals include chicken and pasta or rice with vegetables. We observed good hygienic systems routinely in place. Children's health and well-being is promoted, including lots of outdoor activities.

The child minder maintains good systems to promote children's 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 that takes into account the age, stage of development and needs of the child. We looked at the child minder's policy and procedure for managing behaviour and found it appropriate to meet the needs of the age range of children she cares for. We observed the child minder as calm, clear and conscientious. Children were prepared for any changes to an activity because the child minder let them know in good time, such as at school run time. They were encouraged to help tidy up before the school run, and sang the tidying up song for us. Children are prepared for next steps, such as washing hands before food was served. The child minder told us that she keeps numbers of children attending at any one time lower than she might, so that she can care for each child as she sees appropriate, and never anticipates caring for more than two children at any time.

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 calm and caring atmosphere. She facilitates progress in skills and learning through stimulating activities, with frequent discussion and review of them with children. This is an English speaking service; although the child minder told us she is fluent in Polish and has cared for a Polish child in the past. She supports the Welsh language through activities, and we observed several instances of incidental Welsh being used during play. We saw resources that promote Welsh and multicultural awareness, such as small world toys, dressing up clothes, dolls, books and games and she celebrates a range of world festivals and events with children throughout the year. The child minder told us that she arranges activities and outings to suit the children. Mornings are usually spent at local parent and toddler groups and activity centres, where children take part in messy and active play, such as 'Ants Inya Pants', St Fagan's, the beach, farms and pet shops and the local library. The child minder provides focused and free play activities, which take account of children's individual routines, such as attendance at pre-school nursery. We noted that the child minder pays particular attention to children's interests and uses their curiosity to provide opportunities for extended learning. When a child showed an interest in rockets, she painted the outdoor climbing tower and slide silver, so that it was transformed into a large rocket, encouraging children's imagination and experiential learning. A child told us the names of three familiar birds, but that they said "*Don't see robins these days*". We were told that they had made a snowman in the garden recently which they had painted and then put salt on it to see how quickly the snow melted. Numeracy is encouraged with activities such as checking and recording the outside temperature on the thermometer in the garden. The child minder is familiar with the Foundation Phase principles, and uses the Foundation Phase Profile Handbook for her records. She explained how she then uses her observations to plan for the next steps in children's learning and play, and often uses themes and cultural celebrations to make learning fun. Children enjoy sociable times, and meet with other children and child minders throughout the week at the toddler group sessions. The child minder records daily observations of children's developmental progress and provides parents with a comprehensive annual development review.

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 an excellent range of resources and experiences that enhance their learning and development both in the home and out and about. The child minder provides an environment in which children can learn, play and relax safely and she is aware of the need 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. The child minder carries out regular risk assessments and cleaning routines, including a daily visual check throughout the play space. We were told that daily cleaning takes place, and deeper cleans, using a steam mop take place regularly, often twice a week. The front door was kept locked during the inspection and the garden access is kept secure. We saw the first aid kit and a fire blanket were easily available in the kitchen. We looked at records to show that regular fire drills take place and smoke detectors are checked. A child told us what they do in the emergency evacuation process. A record of accidents is kept, which showed that only minor accidents had occurred and had been dealt with appropriately. Toilet and hand wash facilities are on the ground floor, which are appropriately kept for older children to use easily and independently. The child minder maintains relevant insurances and the annual gas safety certificate for her home. She does not currently have an e-safety policy and procedure to cover children's access to, and use of, the internet, mobile phones and computer games, because minded children are under school age and have no access to digital resources.

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 warm. Play and activities take place in the family living room, the kitchen and dining area and garden. Children can help themselves to toys in the living room, such as books, vehicles, jigsaws and small world activities. Cooking and messy play take place in the kitchen. Children can explore and learn about their surrounding world in the garden where they grow herbs and strawberries, help care for the three rabbits, make dens, and play with found objects, such as interesting stones and pine cones. We saw tadpoles, a home-made and well-equipped mud kitchen and play house. The child minder is innovative and creative, using natural and recycled materials to stimulate children's imagination. There were sound makers and copper wind chimes hanging in the low branches of trees, and the bamboo leaves make a swishing sound in the wind, to enhance children's sensory experiences. The child minder told us that she is planning to cut different lengths of bamboo canes to make musical instruments for the garden, decorating them with thread and Plastikote colours. There was a 'tuff tray' to support focused activities such as dinosaur studies, wheeled toys and a climbing frame and slide.

Children are cared for in a home from home environment which provides excellent play and learning opportunities.

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

Children have easy access to furniture, equipment and a suitable range of toys and materials that are kept in an appropriate condition and meet children's needs. The child minder checks the toys and equipment she uses within her daily visual risk assessment and more formally within the annual risk assessment. Toys and resources are also checked for wear and tear as they are used, or tidied away. Deep cleaning of all toys and play space is planned and carried out regularly. The child minder told us she keeps some toys and resources separately stored, so she can rotate them according to children's interests.

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

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

Children are cared for by a child minder who runs her service so that it meets and exceeds 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. Parents are given the information they need to make an informed choice about using the service. The child minder has several years' practical experience, keeps her training up to date and seeks out additional training to ensure that experiences for children are positive. She provides an 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 and is compliant with the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010 and the NMS. We discussed her statement of purpose and found that it is clear but needed to include a statement to say that CIW will be informed of any changes to her service within 28 days. This was revised immediately once there were no children in her care, while we gave feedback about the inspection. We looked at the child minder's policies and procedures and found that overall they are appropriate and she confirmed that she shares them with parents. In the event that the child minder cares for older school children, she would need to develop a separate complaints procedure for them to use. The child minder is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and she should revise her confidentiality policy, to include this information. Appropriate contracts are discussed and shared with parents setting out the expectations of both parties. Daily registers are completed and she maintains an up to date Disclosure and Barring Service certificates as required. The child minder is keen to develop her own professional expertise and continues to undertake a wide range of relevant training sessions to underpin and enhance the care she provides.

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 is pro-active in taking a reflective and responsive approach to running her service. She reviews her service annually and we looked at her latest comprehensive summary which was completed in July 2017 and sent to CIW within the Self- Assessment of Service form. The child minder asks for contributions from parents and children. The child minder meets and shares ideas with other child minders locally and uses her training experiences to help her improve and reflect on her practice. She told us that no complaints had been received since she was registered. The child minder takes steps to reflect and make changes to her practice to improve the service. We were told that growing basil seeds had proved to be a slow process for children to follow, so they had sown some cress seeds along with the basil, to keep children interested and rewarded. They were also growing carrot tops indoors to increase children's understanding of the growing process.

The child minder reflects on her work and takes steps to provide an improving service for children and their parents.

4.3 How effective are partnerships?

The child minder works closely with parents to ensure their children's needs are met. Discussion with her showed that she knows the children and their families well and she is currently caring for children who have been with her since they were babies. The child minder provides parents with the information needed to make informed choices about their child's care and described appropriate settling in processes designed to meet each family's needs. Parents are given verbal and written information about their child's activities, food and personal care during the day. The child minder told us that she texted a parent who was unwell recently to reassure them that their child was fine. The parent responded with *"Thank you for taking such good care of them. I know they're being looked after so well"*. She provides good links between school and family life, because she does the dropping off and collecting, so not all parents have face to face connections with their child's teacher. This helps ensure children's needs are at the heart of her service. A parent commented on their child's progress report, saying *"A very detailed report which I thoroughly enjoyed reading. [Child] has learned so much while being cared for by you and I would like to thank you for all the opportunities you have given them which have helped with their development"*.

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 Areas of non compliance identified at this inspection

None

5.3 Recommendations for improvement

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

- to revise the confidentiality policy to include registration with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

How we undertook this inspection

This inspection was announced at short notice and undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. The inspector undertook two visits to the service on the one day, each of approximately one and a half hours. Feedback of our findings to the child minder took place at the end of the visit. There was one pre-school aged child 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 child interacting with the child minder and choosing their activities;
- we spoke with the child, 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.cssiw.org.uk

6. About the service

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| Type of care provided | Child Minder |
| Registered Person | Helena Kowalewska |
| Registered maximum number of places | 6 |
| Age range of children | Up to school age |
| Opening hours | 08.00 – 17.30 x 5 days a week during school term times only |
| Operating Language of the service | English |
| Date of previous CSSIW inspection | 03 September 2014 |
| Dates of this inspection visit(s) | 09 March 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: none. | |