

Quality of Care Report 2023

Esther's Childminding



Overview:

This year I have grown my business successfully after reducing my numbers to a minimum while our extension was built. The beginning of the year was hard-going without the use of the kitchen but I managed to safely care for one preschool child and a few after school children from my living room by keeping the door shut at all times! We were able to use the kitchen by February and the outdoor yard by March. As the weather improved, we made full use of the bifolding doors and at last, my setting has the real feel of the seamless indoors, outdoors experience.

I have taken on 6 new children this year and increased the hours for several families. I have fantastic new storage for toys in the kitchen and garage and I can keep my prams ready to go in the garage too which makes my life so much easier! The children love playing in the kitchen especially with the underfloor heating– we all love sitting on the floor now!



In the summer I hosted a swimming party for all my mindees and their families. This was great fun and easy to organise as children's tickets are free at our local Lido. We were very lucky with the weather and had great fun together!



Section A

Methods of collecting views:

Parents from each family received a link to an online evaluation form which asked about the quality of my service.

Numbers involved:

I worked with 14 families this year including two pairs of siblings. I had responses from 9 families.

Summary of responses:

1. Are you happy with the format we use to communicate with each other, or would you prefer an alternative method?

Everyone replied 'yes'. Some respondents added that communication with me is always clear.

2. Are you happy with the current routines and activities?

Everyone replied positively to this question. 'I know my daughter is well entertained with Esther, they do lovely crafts and activities. Esther sends photos showing me what a lovely time she is having playing which is lovely to see. Esther has a great selection of toys and a lovely home. I'm very happy with the outside activities in Esther's garden and when they go out and about.'

3. How do you feel about providing a packed lunch for your child/ about the food I provide for evening meals?

No one had concerns about the provision of food I offer. 'Happy with providing a packed lunch and equally happy about the evening meals which are varied and clearly enjoyed by my children.'

4. Do you have any concerns about your child's development?

There were no concerns raised here that I do not already know about and cater for.

5. How do you feel about the methods I use to manage your child's behaviour?

All parents felt confident in my ability to manage their children's behaviour. 'I haven't witnessed this but I'm assuming you're a total trooper and manage it better than us.' 'Always appropriate and I'm always made aware if there are any issues.'

6. Are there any alterations you would like to make to our contract? For example, changes to hours contact phone numbers etc?

No alterations needed. All parents communicate with me regularly and any changes have already been made.

7. Do you have any further feedback for me?

'I'm very grateful that my daughter has such a lovely childminder, I can relax completely knowing she is safe and well cared for. I like Esther's approach to childcare, she creates a very relaxed atmosphere.'

'He has always been very happy to attend and am looking forward to his younger sister starting hopefully in the near future.'

'He is always happy when going to see Esther and this allows me to feel comfortable that he is safe and happy there.'

'Only that I'm grateful.'

'He loves spending time in your setting. He is always happy playing when I arrive to pick him up. I believe he's made some good friendships there and I believe it's helped him come out of his shell more than he would have without staying with you.'

'Just a massive thank you for your ongoing support and helping us juggle work school and everything inbetween. You are a star.'

'I appreciate all your help and responsiveness.'

Questions for the children if they are old enough to answer...

- What do you like about going to Esther's?

'Seeing my friends and playing games.'

'Playing toys.'

'The garage.'

'I like playing with my friends and all the toys. I like pizza night.'

'Playing outside, listening music and playing with a car track.'

'Playing.'

'Seeing his friends, the activities.'

- Do you feel safe at Esther's?

'Yes'

'Yes [probably doesn't know what safe means but he says he's not scared of Esther's house except for the sound of the boiler, which is on brand].'

'Yes. 100%'

- Do you get to choose what to do at Esther's?

'Yes but she does have lots of things we can do.'

'Yes.'

'Yes'

'Yes'

'I'm sure that my child will not get bored.'

'Most of the time.'

'Yes, she always has lots to do.'

- Is there anything you'd like to change or do more of at Esther's

'No.'

'Esther can do washing machines for me [he's obsessed with washing machines now, make of this what you will].'

'Play with the garage.'

'No.'

'No'

'Make cakes'

Section B

Well-being

Rating: Excellent

This year I have helped many new children to settle into new routines. The two new preschool children both took longer than most to feel confident coming here and to be happy enough to leave my lap and play. My calm, patient approach helped both children to feel that while I wasn't their parent, they could trust me and would be safe with me. Clearly outlining the shape of the day helped them to relax, knowing their parents would return in due course. Similarly, my new afterschool children also found setting into their new routines difficult. As always, I found consistency and playfulness helped to set boundaries. On the school run, I brought back the game of sticking your arm out from behind walls so that they could play 'hide and seek' around corners without me losing sight of them and at home I got to know each child and would set out their favourite toy or activity for them so that they knew they could come in and get started straight away.



Almost all children have regular days with me and this has helped them get to know each other and in turn, develop cooperative games and activities that extend over many sessions. The older girls are particularly self-sufficient now and either play on the green where I can see them or draw and colour fantasy characters. The children who would cry on leaving their parents both come in happily now and the younger after-school children play together more.



Every time I go to the park with the toddlers, I take my own outdoor all-weather suits and boots. This saves their own coats and shoes so that they can go home dry and enables me to let them roam freely through mud and puddles. We have taken to going to the bandstand area again as I can safely supervise three little ones there now that I have taught them not to go out of the gates. Through the autumn we have been looking for worms and rescuing them from the tarmac to the flowerbeds!



My own well-being recovered this year after the stresses of managing a building project and I have taken pleasure in reorganising all my resources and using the new space. In November I took a week off in term time to go walking with a friend and that was just the break I needed before going into the busy Christmas period.

Care and Development

Rating: Excellent

I continue to be responsive to the needs of each child and provide activities that will develop each individual. I am child led where possible and do not plan themed activities unless the children ask me to. For example, in the summer holidays when I was catering for at least six children a day for two weeks, the children asked to 'visit' a different country each day. I had used this theme several years ago and a couple of children remembered it. The first day we decided on the countries, I quickly ordered a few resources and bits of food and we made a window display from that country each day. This is the pinata we made then demolished on our Mexican day!



At the beginning of the year, I bought a new low table with a metal tray top which has been fantastic for all sorts of play activities. I encourage children to experiment with playdoh, flour, water, glitter, googly eyes and many other loose parts. Many of my more traditional toys are available in a low cupboard which the children open up themselves and choose from. Other resources I rotate from the garage or less accessible cupboards, but I always give children the choice. I have given away a few toys

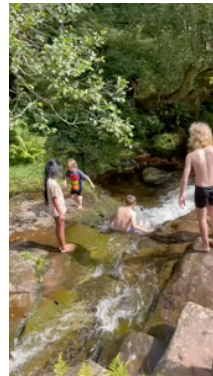
which cause arguments, frustration or are simply not child friendly – for example the track-master track and the dominoes train both need adults to set up and then do not provide children with any opportunity to play freely.

With children coming before school this year, one child who's the same age as my son, has started playing the piano. She would have a go at my son's pieces after he practised each morning, so I signed her up for her own account on Simply Piano. When my son moved to lessons with a piano teacher, I recommended it to her parents and now they are both progressing well with private lessons.





The holiday care has been fun this year. As well as going around the world in 10 days, we have also been trampolining, swimming, to the cinema, to softplay, to big parks, country houses, to the beach and swimming in waterfalls! I often organise these trips with another mum or get my husband to come along and always risk assess first. The holidays also give the school children extended periods to play at home and by banning the use of screens and other devices for large parts of the day, children in my care find they love to play creatively. Two children recently found out they would both be attending on an inset day and planned to resurrect a game they used to play together years ago – Artic foxes. One brought along their own tail and we went back to the fancy dress box for the other. We made a den in the new kitchen seating area with a parachute and blankets and the game carried on from there.



I continue to provide an evening meal for all the after-school children and most stay for this. I have several children with allergies or specific dietary needs and factor this in when planning the weekly menu. I often eat later myself as we regularly have six children eating around the dining room table but I always try to sit with them. This year I have helped the children to devise a number of new games to play during mealtimes that help turn-taking and keep the atmosphere fun and also keep the children at the table longer, helping reluctant eaters to have a bit more! The favourite at the moment is guess the character from their colours.



The Environment

Rating: Excellent

I am so pleased with the way that the children's experience of play has been transformed by the extension to my kitchen and the addition of a garage. Before, my toy storage was all in the downstairs bathroom off the kitchen. Now I have many more kitchen cupboards and all the tools and garden equipment living under the stairs has been relocated to the garage. I have been able to organise the area under the stairs and my new cupboards so that that items used daily can be readily accessible.



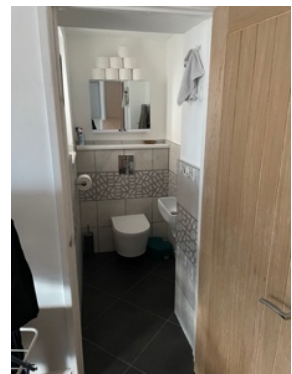
Opening up the doors to the outdoor area was fantastic from April to October. Even into the winter we often used the garden for messy play and water play, draining the water butt regularly! The space outside is safer without the slope up to the patio and easy for me to supervise a group of children some of whom want to be outside and some inside. While the patio area is smaller, it is plenty of space to play in and I have kept the wendy house which continues to be so popular, more so without windows and doors! I have added a children's play café/mud kitchen and planter and am just waiting for the last of the rendering to be finished on the walls before filling it. I'm looking forward to planting some vegetables in there with the children next year.



Having a larger kitchen area with seating works well with the larger number of children attending after school. Sometimes I have 8 children here, from 4 year olds to my own 12 year old. Setting up three or four distinct play areas helps the children to settle down and we often have cars, puzzles and trains all on the kitchen floor, a game at the dining table and another imaginary game happening on the sofa! The longer kitchen is also good for a game of catch or piggy in the middle with a soft ball.



The new smaller toilet room off the kitchen works well. I had the toilet and hand basin fitted lower than normal so that the children would find it easier to use. I have one step which the smallest children have learnt to pull out to use the sink. They all have their own towels again which promotes independence and hygiene.



Leadership and Management

Rating: Excellent



This year I applied for money from the Welsh Government for outdoor equipment and new car seats. I was successful in getting £3500 worth of new equipment to enhance my outdoor area and improve the safety of travel. The car seats are all rear facing and fit children from 6 months to the age of 7. The outdoor play kitchen /café has been a great addition to the outdoor area and I look forward to using it more when the weather improves this year.

In May, the revised National Minimum Standards were published prompting me to complete a thorough review of my setting to make sure I was fully compliant. As a result, I have started to complete formal observations of the preschool children again as I recognise this is a requirement. I made sure all my mandatory training was up to date and logged the dates of renewal for my DBS, insurances, Pacey membership and safety certificates. My Safeguarding certificate was due to run out in October – unfortunately I missed the free course provided by RCT childcare team. I was booked onto it but I was on holiday and forgot to get off the beach quickly enough to log onto the Teams call. As I was banned from booking on any other RCT courses for 6 months as a punishment (!!!) I paid for a private course and completed it in September.

I have been very grateful to a couple of local childminders who have started actively networking and bringing many childminders in Pontypridd together. Being able to discuss practise and raise concerns with colleagues is so valuable. Socially it has been lovely to get to know more colleagues, to attend a weekly childminders' playgroup and to go out for a staff meal out at Christmas – my first work's Christmas do in 17 years!!



This year, one after-school child left in September as his mum was home on maternity leave and I recently said goodbye to one pre-schooler who starts school in January. However, I'm in discussions with both families about taking on their baby siblings. I have a new two year old signed up starting this month and am ready to increase the hours of another pre-schooler in May when she turns three.

I look forward to 2024 as a time to consolidate my practise in the new space, to remain reflective and to build relationships and my business.

