



# Childcare Inspection Report on

**Lee Simons**

**Cardiff**



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## **Description of the service**

Lee Simons has been registered as child minder with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) since 2009. He jointly runs Mel's Playtime Tots with his wife, who is also a registered child minder. The service is registered to care for up to 10 children under the age of twelve years. Children have access to a designated play room which is used for minding, a conservatory, an enclosed garden and where appropriate, the kitchen or lounge. The service is delivered through the English language.

## **Summary of our findings**

### **1. Overall assessment**

Children experience a good standard of care at this service. Children are happy and their needs are at the centre of the service. The child minder makes good use of both the indoor and outdoor areas to provide activities that are exciting and engaging for children. This helps them to feel confident to explore, express their feelings and ask for help. The child minder was calm and caring with the children and there was an air of mutual warmth and respect between him, his wife and the children present. Children benefit from a well organised environment that encourages them to make independent choices and promotes play, learning and development. Leadership and management of the service are efficient and the child minder's confidence shines through. Some improvements are required.

### **2. Improvements**

The child minder has continued to update mandatory training and checks. Since the last inspection, the child minder has joined his wife in child minding on a full-time basis, and children benefit from their joint commitment and expertise. Since the inspection visit, the child minder has updated his child protection policy and statement of purpose.

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

There were no non-compliance issues identified at this inspection.

We made some best practice recommendations during the inspection. These are detailed in the body of the report and summarised at the end.

# **1. Well-being**

## **Summary**

Children experience a good quality, nurturing service which gives them a solid foundation for their learning and development. There is a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere within the home and children are happy to express their views and opinions.

## **Our findings**

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

Children speak or express themselves very well and can communicate their needs in a variety of ways. Their preferences, needs and feelings are well understood by the child minder and we saw these take precedence over daily routines. Children make appropriate choices and decisions because they are aware of the options available to them. They are consulted over a range of issues, such as choosing what they want to play with and they were obviously familiar with the choices available. We saw children approaching the child minder confidently to chat or to ask for assistance and their wishes were valued.

Children's right to express themselves freely and to make independence choices is encouraged and respected by the child minder.

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

Children receive consistent, nurturing care at the service and therefore feel safe, happy and valued. We saw that they were familiar with the routine of the day, which was arranged to meet their needs. For example, when lunch was mentioned, they automatically started to help tidy up. We saw children going to the child minder for comfort and reassurance and strong bonds were evident between the children and the child minder. Parents we spoke with confirmed that their respective children were given appropriate settling in periods and are well settled, happy and content in the care of the child minder.

Children's emotional well-being is enhanced by tailored settling in procedures and good relationships with the child minder.

### **1.3 How well do children interact?**

Children interact and co-operate well with their peers and adults, and younger children are learning to express their needs. We heard children regularly saying please and thank you and they were consistently praised for positive behaviour or being kind to their friends. We saw young children waiting patiently for their lunch and they were thrilled with the praise they received from the child minder for taking turns and being

helpful. Children were calm and relaxed in the home environment and they had obvious friendship bonds with each other.

Children interact appropriately for their age and stage of development and have positive relationships with the child minder and one another.

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

Children enjoy and are engaged in their play and can also relax during quieter times. They have access to plenty of activities and resources which are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Throughout the visit there was a balance of both self directed and adult directed play available for the children to choose from. Children at times played alone with a selection of toys and were very content. Equally, we saw them happily playing and interacting with the child minder. The younger children benefit from regular visits to toddler groups, the library or play areas to help them learn to socialise, take turns and share with children of a similar age.

Children enjoy a range of play and learning experiences and benefit from accessing community facilities regularly.

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

Children are developing their confidence and independence. They are encouraged to do things for themselves, they take pride in doing so and are given time to carry out their chosen activities and discover how things work. We watched the children try to put on and take off their own shoes and to tidy their toys when finished. Children have the opportunity to undertake a variety of different play activities designed to develop different skills. Children showed an interest and curiosity in the world around them and their play activities.. This supports them to foster their ideas independently as well as developing their creativity. Children are able to extend their play because the child minder and his wife are always on hand to provide assistance if needed.

Children have influence over their play and learning and are well supported and encouraged to develop a good range of self-help skills.

## **2. Care and Development**

### **Summary**

The child minder has robust systems and procedures in place to ensure that he can offer a quality service to children in his care. We found the child minder to be proactive regarding recommendations made.

### **Our findings**

#### **2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?**

The child minder understands his responsibilities in respect of keeping children safe and healthy. He demonstrated a good knowledge of the signs of abuse and neglect and the procedure to record and where to seek advice if he has concerns. The child minder told us that he has booked onto a child protection training course in September to ensure his knowledge is kept up-to-date. The child minder updated his child protection policy following the inspection, ensuring accurate contact numbers and reference to the Prevent Duty was included. This is a government strategy to help identify children who may be drawn into extremism and radicalisation and all child minders should be familiar with its content. The child minder implements good practice in relation to healthy eating and lifestyles to improve outcomes for children. For example, he ensures the children are physically active daily and provides healthy meal and snack options. The child minder has a current first aid qualification and first aid kits are kept replenished in the home and car. We saw that children are provided with paper towels to dry their hands, to reduce the risk of cross contamination. A clear medication policy is in place and we noted that medication is only given with prior written permission from parents.

The child minder keeps children safe and healthy as a result of his knowledge and the systems he has in place.

#### **2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?**

The child minder understands child development and he is a positive role model. There is a comprehensive behaviour management policy in place and we saw that he uses positive behaviour management strategies to promote children's welfare. He told us that he takes into account the age and developmental stage of children and understands that these factors can affect children's behaviour. The child minder was responsive; he spoke gently and was encouraging towards children, giving lots of praise for achievements and efforts. We did not see any unwanted behaviour during the inspection, but the child minder told us that if this occurred, he would use distraction techniques to refocus children and to encourage co-operation and sharing. It was obvious that the children were familiar with the routines within the home and children responded well to the warm atmosphere and positive interactions.

The child minder is adept at supporting positive interactions between children.

### **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. He was responsive to the children's attempts at communication; there was plenty of good eye contact and questioning to help understand what the child wanted or needed and he spent much of his time at the children's level. Throughout the inspection the child minder gave the children choices to help them decide what to do and regularly checked they were content. For example, "Are you happy playing with those cars?" The child minder keeps a folder of photographs of children engaged in different activities and comments on their progress. We saw that the child minder plans activities for the children in line with events on the calendar, such as Christmas and Father's Day. There was a large emphasis on free play and doing things he knows different children like. The child minder told us that working alongside his wife allows them to offer plenty of choice to children. For example, he told us that one child prefers trips to the park rather than going to soft play, so they sometimes separate to offer different opportunities based upon likes and dislikes. The child minder explained that he promotes children's awareness of other cultures by celebrating festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year and has a selection of multicultural toys and resources to promote children's understanding. Parents informed us that they have regular feedback on their child's progress and daily routines.

Children's development is promoted by the child minder who has the required skills and knowledge to meet their individual needs well.

### **3. Environment**

#### **Summary**

The child minder's home is safe, welcoming and well maintained. Children spend most of their time in the well-equipped play room, although they have access to other areas on the ground floor. There is also a safe, enclosed rear garden. Resources are plentiful and the child minder ensures that children are well supervised at all times.

#### **Our findings**

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

The child minder is committed to providing a safe environment for children and he is fully aware of his responsibility in relation to the safety and welfare of children. We found that his home is well maintained and all resources were in good working order. The security of the premises is well maintained. The front door was kept locked throughout the visit, a record of visitors was maintained and registers for children's attendance were kept in a daily diary. Appropriate insurance for the home and car was in place and an annual gas safety check had been undertaken as required. We saw that accidents and incidents were recorded and a template is in place for pre-existing injuries should this be required. We saw that fire evacuation drills had taken place and were recorded, including any hazards encountered and action taken following the drill. The child minder told us that he undertakes a general risk assessment of the home every Monday and also carries out a daily visual check to ensure play areas are safe. We saw that a written risk assessment was also in place. However, we discussed updating this to include the family dog and compiling a separate risk assessment for school transport and outings.

The child minder ensures the environment is safe for minded children.

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

The child minder's home is comfortable, well-maintained and there is plenty of space for the number of children cared for. Child-sized table and chairs were available for children's use and the storage of resources is at a suitable height for most children to access independently. We saw that the dedicated playroom is filled with good quality resources, although children are not restricted to this room if they want to go elsewhere on the ground floor. The home benefits from good natural light and the downstairs toilet allows for children's independent use; it is clean and fresh and a step stool enables children to reach the sink. The environment provides suitable opportunities to develop children's skills whilst maintaining the feel of a homely environment. The garden is suitable for children and the child minder told us that although they use the garden regularly, children often prefer to explore their local parks and other amenities, so they are guided by the children and are often out of the



house. The combination of indoor and outdoor play provides a rich environment for children to play and learn.

The child minder provides an environment which is well resourced, suitable and safe for children's needs.

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

Children of varying ages have access to a range of good quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources. These are plentiful to ensure children have variety and choice. Resources included musical toys, role play items, cars, arts and craft materials, dolls and sensory toys. We also noted a games console for older children and puzzles and constructions materials for children of different ages to promote their development. We also saw photographic evidence of a number of creative activities undertaken using a wide selection of different crafts and materials. We noted that all resources are well maintained. The child minder told us that he regularly cleans the toys and immediately discards anything that is broken.

The child minder ensures there are good quality resources and equipment available that support and encourage the children's skills and development.

## **4. Leadership and Management**

### **Summary**

The child minder manages his service well. He is motivated, competent and open to new developments as a means of promoting positive outcomes to children and their families. The service is well managed and partnerships with parents are strong.

### **Our findings**

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

The child minder has a vision for the service and this is shared in his statement of purpose. We found that it contained the required information but it was unclear when the document was last updated. The child minder sent a reviewed document to CIW immediately following the inspection. A variety of relevant policies and procedures for the service are in place. We saw that parents are provided with information prior to their children starting, to enable them to make an informed choice about using the service. However, not all documentation was clearly dated and the complaints policy should accurately reflect CIW's role in handling complaints. The child minder has a good understanding of current best practice relevant to the children in his care. We looked at a sample of records including children's contracts, which contained good quality information. The child minder was aware of new data protection legislation but had not yet registered with the Information Commissioners Office in relation to storing personal data. Discussions with the child minder showed that he uses CIW website and his umbrella support group if he has any queries and to keep up to date with changes.

The child minder delivers a consistent standard of care to children and their parents and is open to new developments.

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

The child minder is reflective; he seeks feedback on his own practice and understands the importance of effective evaluation and planning for improvement. He completed an annual review of his service in November 2017. The child minder explained how he gathers children's views on an ongoing basis to improve his service, but this good practice was not evidenced in the report. The child minder routinely seeks feedback from parents on his practice. We saw questionnaires completed by parents and a number of 'thank you' cards from families that he has worked with. The child minder told us that he likes to chat to parents on a day to day basis to ensure they feel welcome. Parents confirmed this, telling us that the child minder and his wife give them plenty of reassurance about their children's welfare. A complaints policy is in place, although no complaints have been received.

The child minder consistently evaluates his business to ensure that children experience an improving service.

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

The service is managed successfully. The child minder maintains orderly records of his qualifications, training and DBS certificates for himself and his wife. The child minder is fully aware of the need to undertake DBS checks for his children when they turn 16. The child minder prepares the environment in advance of children arriving so that he is ready to engage with them straight away. He works effectively alongside his co-child minder wife, to support the smooth running of the setting. They work together well as a team and they told us that they draw on each other's strengths, splitting tasks where necessary to ensure children receive a valuable service.

The child minder manages his time well and plans around the children's needs; he and his wife work effectively together.

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

Partnerships with parents are mutually respectful and effective. Parents are provided with relevant information needed to make informed choices about the care of their children. The child minder works well with parents to tailor settling in arrangements to children's and parents needs and speaks with them daily to ensure their needs continue to be met. The child minder informs parents about their child's day both verbally during collection and by sending messages and photographs (mostly via 'WhatsApp') during the day. A parent we spoke with told us "I have highly recommended them to other parents" and each parent we spoke with described a high level of satisfaction with the service, including information received regarding their children's progress and learning.

The child minder nurtures strong partnerships to ensure that children experience all the support required to meet their individual needs.

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

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

None.

### **5.2 Recommendations for improvement**

The following best practice recommendations were discussed:

- Review and date policies and procedures for version control and alter wording of Complaints policy to reflect CIW's role in handling concerns;
- register with the Information Commissioner's Office;
- document a risk assessment for school transport and outings and add the family dog to the existing risk assessment and
- expand the quality of care review report to evidence the ways children's views are obtained.

## 6. How we undertook this inspection

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

- One inspector completed one visit to the service; the inspection was unannounced, although the child minder's availability for the week had been established in advance. In total we spent approximately five and a half hours at the service;
- we observed the children's play and daily routines;
- we observed children's engagement and interactions with their friends, the child minder and his co-child minder;
- we reviewed information held by CIW;
- we undertook a visual inspection of the premises;
- we spoke to children throughout the day and three parents;
- we looked at a range of records including children's contracts, the statement of purpose, some policies and procedures, accidents and incidents records and the child minder's daily calendar/diary and
- we provided feedback jointly to the child minder and his wife at the end of 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	Lee Simons
Registered maximum number of places	10
Age range of children	Under 12 years
Opening hours	07:30-18:00 Monday to Friday
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	29 January 2015
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	01 August 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.	