



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300052
Inspection date	27 June 2006
Inspector	Karen Cockings
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Childminding

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The childminder was registered in 1989. She lives with her husband and their two adult sons in a village to the north of Sheffield. The house is within walking distance of local schools, parks and toddler groups. The whole of the ground floor is used for childminding and the bathroom on the first floor. There is a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time. She currently minds four pre-school children and seven children of school age. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The childminder is a member of the Sheffield Childminding Association and regularly attends a local childminder support group.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and comfortable home, where the childminder maintains good standards of hygiene to keep children healthy. She ensures that floors and work surfaces are kept clean and takes care to disinfect areas as necessary to prevent the spread of any infections. She has gathered together a wide range of useful information to help her to promote children's good health and to deal effectively with any illnesses. For example, she has guidance materials readily available about the prevention of food poisoning and about illnesses, such as meningitis. She ensures that parents are aware of her policy with regard to the care of sick children and takes appropriate action if children become ill during the childminding day.

Children become aware of the importance of good personal hygiene. They know that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet, before eating and after playing outside. They colour in handprint pictures to display above the sink as a reminder. The childminder also prompts them if they forget. This helps to reinforce positive messages and encourages independence in personal care.

The childminder keeps the home warm but well ventilated to ensure that children are playing in comfortable temperatures. They enjoy plenty of fresh air and exercise, which contributes to their good health. In the garden they have access to suitable equipment, such as small slides and sit and ride toys. The childminder organises obstacle courses and games, which encourages children to be active and to use their bodies in different ways. They also regularly visit local parks, toddler groups and indoor play centres. At the childminder's home they have space to move around freely. Children who are learning to walk, confidently practise new skills as they move between rooms and explore their environment.

Children learn about the importance of healthy eating through discussion and planned activities. For example, they make collage pictures of foods that are good for them and those that are not so healthy. They participate in a "Food, fitness and fun" session with other children and their childminders, where they enjoy activities, such as making and tasting fruit kebabs. Parents send packed lunches for their children but snacks include fruit and toast or sandwiches. Children have good access to drinks throughout the day.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The childminder gives high priority to children's safety. She maintains a secure environment by conducting risk assessments and taking effective measures to deal with potential hazards. For example, she uses safety gates to restrict children's unsupervised access to the stairs, ensures that sockets are covered and prevents trapped fingers by fitting safety devices to internal doors. She supervises children carefully while allowing them freedom to explore and make good use of the available space.

Fire safety is addressed well. The childminder has attended a fire safety awareness session, which included a risk assessment of the premises by a fire officer. Smoke alarms and fire blanket are in place and there are clear procedures for evacuating the premises in an emergency.

Children develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and to avoid accidents. During outings, they learn about road safety and the need to be aware of possible dangers in public areas. The childminder carefully explains to them why they need to stay within her view. Younger children hold hands or wrist straps and reins are available if needed. Through explanation and discussion, children begin to understand why it is important to comply with agreed rules and boundaries.

Children have access to a varied range of toys and equipment, which is regularly checked to ensure that it is safe and suitable. A selection of toys is stored in boxes in the play area, so that children can make their own choices. Toys are cleaned routinely, especially those used by babies. Younger children are kept safe and comfortable because the childminder has suitable equipment for them, such as high chairs and booster seats. She keeps abreast of any new safety regulations, including recent information about secure seating for children when travelling in cars.

The childminder has a good understanding of her responsibilities with regard to child protection. She has attended relevant training and has guidance materials readily available for reference. This has helped to heighten her awareness of different types of abuse and the possible indicators. She knows how to seek advice if she has concerns, which ensures that children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the childminder's care. They share a warm and positive relationship with her, which helps them to feel secure. They gain confidence in themselves as she encourages them to explore and to practise new skills. She sits on the floor with the younger children, engaging their interest in resources, cuddling and talking to them. She extends their play by helping them to operate musical and interactive toys, showing them how to press buttons and to make shapes fit.

Children have good opportunities for outings in the surrounding area. They visit toddler groups and a local childminding group, which helps them to develop social skills and enables them to enjoy different play experiences. Other than these regular routines, the childminder tends not to plan but prefers to respond to children's interests. Older children will decide for themselves what they wish to do, although she gives suggestions and guidance. The childminder is familiar with the Birth to three matters framework but there is potential to develop its use further to support existing good practice.

Children enjoy a variety of creative activities, such as making collage pictures, painting and play dough. They have access to a wide selection of toys to help them to play imaginatively and to support physical play. The childminder has a good understanding of how children learn through play and she is receptive to new ideas, taking advantage of links with other providers and early years settings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The childminder is very attentive to children's individual needs. She gets to know children well so that she is familiar with their eating and sleeping patterns and the activities they enjoy. She is sensitive to signs of tiredness or anxiety and responds appropriately, staying close to children who need reassurance. Children are encouraged to make choices and to develop a sense of belonging.

Children have access to a selection of books and toys which reflect positive images of cultural differences and disability. The childminder makes use of opportunities as they arise to discuss issues and respond to children's queries. She also finds ways of increasing her own awareness by attending workshops and gathering together relevant information. The planning and provision of activities to increase children's understanding is, however, an area for further development.

A positive approach is taken towards the management of children's behaviour. The childminder makes sure she lets children know when they have been kind or helpful. They are involved in discussions about the agreed house rules, as necessary, and the childminder is careful to explain why behaviour is unacceptable or may be harmful. She praises their achievements and encourages them to share and to take turns. This builds self-esteem and helps children to play cooperatively together.

There is a strong partnership with parents, which enhances children's care. The childminder provides a helpful welcome leaflet with information about herself and the activities she provides, together with brief policy statements and details of her emergency cover arrangements. She also shares a portfolio with new parents at their first meeting. This ensures that they are well informed about the service she offers. There is ongoing communication about daily events and children's progress. For younger children, the childminder also keeps a diary, which is shared daily with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable and well organised environment. Indoor and outdoor space is used well to provide a range of activities for children, to support their play and development. The childminder plans her time effectively so that she can meet the varying needs of children attending. She makes suitable arrangements for emergency cover with other local childminders who know the children she cares for. This provides continuity for children and their families.

The childminder has many years experience of caring for children. She has developed her practice by building effective links with childminder support groups and by attending relevant training. All required paperwork is in place and stored securely. A range of written policies and procedures underpin the service and are shared with parents. These help the provision to run smoothly and support children's well-being.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the childminder was asked to ensure that the rear garden was safely enclosed. She has since fitted mesh along the base of the hedge, so that there are no gaps through which children could squeeze. This and other measures, such as the high level fastenings on the gate, ensure that children are secure when playing outside.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since April 2004.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to develop the range of play experiences for younger children, in line with the Birth to three matters framework
- consider ways of extending the range of activities to further promote children's awareness of diversity within society.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk