



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	158970
Inspection date	27 September 2006
Inspector	Paula Durrant
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 has been registered since February 2001. She lives with her husband and their three children, two grown up adults and a younger sibling of ten years. They live in a semi-detached property on the outskirts of the town of Stevenage. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play. The childminder is registered to provide care for a total of five children under the age of eight years. She is currently minding a total of five children, four under five years and one child over the age of five years. A majority of children in attendance are part-time, with the exception of one who is full-time. The family has a dog and some fish. The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children. She makes full use of community based amenities, such as parent and toddler groups, shops, the library and parks. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association and has achieved 'Herts Quality' accreditation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they become ill or have an accident as the childminder adheres to environmental health and hygiene guidelines. For example, children who are unwell are discouraged from attending in line with stipulated exclusion periods for childhood diseases. Appropriate measures, such as the childminder's maintenance of a valid first aid qualification and sufficient medical supplies to administer emergency aid all contribute to maintaining children's health care needs. Although the childminder records accidental injuries and medication administered in line with registration requirements current contractual agreements do not give parental permission for the childminder to obtain emergency medical advice or treatment. This means that there is a potential for children not to receive appropriate medical intervention should an emergency situation occur. Good practice, such as suitable storage and preparation of foods, the wearing of latex gloves when changing nappies, use of antibacterial solutions to cleanse work surfaces and equipment used means that children's welfare is not compromised as cross contamination is actively minimised.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene as they follow the daily routine, such as when washing their hands. They know the reasons behind the hand-washing process as the childminder frequently introduces discussions about germs and the effects they can have on their bodies, making them poorly and unwell. Good levels of monitoring children in this task, such as the preparation of warm water in the sink means that children benefit in cleansing their hands in a warm solution which assists in the eradication of dirt and germs.

The childminder is flexible in the provision of meals working in partnership with parents and carers. Current practice is that children have a light lunch mid-day of a sandwich with optional fillings and a pudding of yoghurt. They also gain a snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon from a variety of different types of fruit. All meals comply with individual dietary needs. Children stay well hydrated as drinks are offered routinely throughout the day. Older children know to ask for further drinks if they are thirsty.

Children have daily opportunities to exert energy and gain fresh air. Children regularly take the dog for a walk and enjoy the opportunities provided to explore their environment as they run around in the woods discovering natural habitats of insects and animals and identify different types of trees and leaves. They also attend the local parks and use the garden equipment to enhance physical control of their bodies. Children rest and are active in accordance to their needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe family home where significant emphasis is given to eradicating potential hazards. For example, informal daily checks of the home are carried out prior to children's arrival. This ensures the suitability of the premises for young children.

Children access a wide range of good quality resources that are well maintained. The childminder abides to manufacturers' recommendations providing age appropriate equipment that holds a recognised safety kite mark. Children learn to keep themselves safe as the childminder explains house rules and road safety when out. For example, children know to sit down when eating as there is a potential to choke on undigested food, to hold hands alongside busy main roads and not talk to strangers when out in the local community as this may compromise their well-being. Children stay safe in the event of a fire as the childminder regularly talks through and practises her evacuation procedure.

Children's welfare is high priority in this household. They are cared for by a suitable adult who has a clear understanding of child development. The childminder has completed vetting checks and demonstrates a strong knowledge of child protection. She knows where and how to record and report concerns in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident and settled in their surroundings due to the exceptionally close relationship with the childminder who is highly attentive to the children in her care. She provides them with an extensive range of practical age-appropriate activities that inspire interest and promote challenge. She recognises individual preferences, such as the desire to play creatively. Children enjoy dressing-up in a range of costumes and participating in making under the sea collages using a varied range of media and materials. They purposefully discuss the colour of paper used, such as when identifying green paper to represent the seaweed.

Children develop positive levels of self-esteem as they experiment and reaffirm their skills. For example, children gain an opportunity to mark make with a purpose as they label their own art work. The childminder is respectful of each child's level of ability offering additional support as and where required. For example, younger children are given a dot-to-dot pattern to assist in establishing the correct letter formation of the letters in their names. Children rise to the challenge set. They carefully scribe over the dots giving consideration to the hold on their writing tool. Children know and are confident to seek reassurance from the childminder. For example, a child requested confirmation when changing their grip on their pencil asking 'is this the right way' before continuing to write.

The childminder is very competent in providing a range of stimulating activities which she prepares in readiness. Although informal planning mechanisms are in place to guide the childminder in promoting equal coverage of all areas of development this is not set in stone. The childminder is intuitive to the children's needs and recognises that on occasion other interests may take precedence. She is very skilled at taking her lead from the children and in implementing incidental learning. For example, children benefit in developing an awareness of how to handle books appropriately as they share the responsibility of turning the pages of the story being read. They openly engage in purposeful discussions about the book, such as when guessing who is hiding under the flap when looking for 'Spot'. The childminder has a knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and is beginning to use this to inform her practice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs take high priority in this home-from-home provision. A strong working partnership with parents supports the individual care needs and delivery of service. Mutual respect, love and understanding all play an integral part of the childminder's practice. Children are exceptionally polite, courteous and respectful of the childminder and her home. For example, they remove their outer footwear at the door in order to maintain the cleanliness of the house. They know the house rules and use social graces, such as please and thank you, without prompt. Children play an active part in their own learning. They make independent decisions in their play and the activities that they wish to participate in. They have positive levels of self-esteem and respect the opinions and actions of others because the childminder consistently praises their efforts and re-affirms their achievements, guiding their social and moral development. Although the childminder is aware of her responsibility to manage parental complaints she has yet to formalise her procedures in line with recent legislative changes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's needs take high priority in this well maintained and organised setting. The childminder prepares her home in readiness and dedicates her time purely to the children in attendance. A conscientious decision to work under her registration numbers means that children receive exceptional levels of support, both in play and in having their individual needs met. A flexible working partnership with parents and a commitment to promoting home-from-home care means that children become part of an extended family unit. Children confidently choose activities and extend their own play and learning in an imaginative way. The childminder effectively uses her written procedures and routines to effectively promote the welfare, care and learning of all the children. 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 required to update her first aid knowledge, which includes training in first aid for infants and young children, which is consistent with any guidance issued to local authorities by the Secretary of State. Children's health care needs are met as the childminder has completed a suitable training course and holds a valid first aid certificate.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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):

- ensure parental consent is in place for the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment
- implement a system in line with current legislative changes for the management of parental complaints.

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