



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	311636
Inspection date	10 October 2006
Inspector	Kathleen Snowdon

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 outstanding. 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 partner and two adult children aged 21 and 23 in Sunnyside, Gateshead. Her home is close to all facilities including nurseries and schools. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play. The family keeps a pet dog and a pet cat.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time. She is currently minding three children under five at staggered intervals and two children over five before and after school. The childminder attends local toddler groups on a regular basis. She is a member of the National Childminding Association and is also a member of an accredited Childminder Network.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The children have excellent scope in which to learn about the source of some of the food they eat. For example, they regularly visit the childminder's allotment where they pick vegetables and collect freshly laid eggs. The children often help the childminder to prepare these to make delicious and appetising meals, such as traditional roast dinners, home made soup and salads. These offer the children the essential nourishment that they need to grow and develop.

Helping the childminder to prepare 'smoothies' is a favourite activity. The children learn useful facts about nutrition when they hear about the vitamins and minerals contained in fresh ingredients that they blend together. This provides them with an excellent opportunity to experiment with food combinations, taste and texture and encourages them to adopt a healthy approach to eating.

Exhilarating music and movement sessions inspire the younger children to try out new skills such as somersaulting, hopping and skipping. The children improve their coordination as they ride around with vigour and enthusiasm on bikes and scooters, often pretending to be fantasy characters such as 'Superman'. The older children play energetic team games, such as football or cricket, to boost their stamina and to improve their level of fitness. These very good opportunities make a hugely valuable contribution to the children's overall physical development and encourage them to be alert and active.

The older children are developing an excellent understanding of cleanliness and personal hygiene. For example, while they automatically wash their hands after using the toilet, they also remind their peers to do so if they forget. Consequently, even the youngest children are adopting effective practices that help them to stay fit and well. Highly appropriate arrangements are in place to deal with children who are ill. These simple, but extremely useful measures help to prevent the spread of infection and common illnesses.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Outstanding measures are in place which help the children to keep safe. For example, a road safety officer is a frequent visitor to the childminder's home. During these visits the children sing and dance to songs, such as 'Stop, Look and Listen'. They listen eagerly to relevant stories, such as 'Stepping Out'. These excellent arrangements convey vital information to the children about the hazards of crossing the road.

Worthwhile and fascinating outings extend the children's awareness of people who help us to stay safe. For instance, they visit the local fire station where they are intrigued by the engines and the officers. The younger children enjoy looking at books about favourite characters such as 'Fireman Sam'. This gives meaning to the regular fire drills that they take part in with the childminder, which equip them with the knowledge that they need to stay safe in emergencies.

The children have very easy access to an exceptionally wide range of equipment. This allows the children to make entirely safe choices. The equipment is completely appropriate to the developmental stages of all of the children. Thorough weekly cleaning and checking routines ensure that items are safe and hygienic for the children to use. The children often help the childminder to carry out these routines. This gives the children first hand experience of risk assessment and encourages them to take responsibility.

The children's ongoing safety is extremely well protected by the childminder's excellent awareness of child protection issues and by the vigilant way that the children are supervised. This is reflected in the highly conscientious steps that the childminder has taken to make her home secure. For instance, a closed circuit television monitors visitors to the house and external doors remain locked to prevent unauthorised access. This ensures that children remain completely safe on a day to day basis.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent use is made of the natural resources that surround the childminder's home and spontaneous events, such as rain showers. For example, the children go for walks in local woods where they make first hand observations about how nature works. They watch the effect of the passing seasons on the surrounding foliage and they enjoy watching mini-beasts at work, such as spiders making webs. When it rains the children are thrilled to be able to splash in puddles and to collect rain water to water plants with. These lovely opportunities increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

The children are extremely enthusiastic and highly creative role players. They have access to a fantastic wardrobe of dressing up clothes including wigs, jewellery, hats and masks and many other role play props, such as puppets, dolls, cash registers and telephones. These encourage the children to use their imagination to the fullest, for example, when they pretend that they are scary monsters or Christmas trees.

The children take an active part in planning the activities they do. This keeps them motivated and engrossed. For example, they love to bake and cook, so this takes place frequently. The children find out about processes as they observe how ingredients blend together and watch cakes and puddings rise during cooking. They learn, in the most meaningful way possible, about end results when they eat the delicious end results. The children are very keen to tidy up and to do light household chores, such as washing beakers or dusting. These extremely useful opportunities encourage the development of positive personal qualities, such as helpfulness and consideration.

The children have excellent and rewarding relationships with the childminder and with their peers. They learn that they are special when the childminder tells them how much she cares for them. This boosts the children's self-esteem and enables them to form secure later relationships with others.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent and consistent guidance helps the children to behave very well. For example, the childminder always ensures that the children understand why certain behaviour is unacceptable. This encourages the children to reflect on their actions and teaches them right from wrong. Positive actions and kindness are always acknowledged with verbal praise and sometimes applause, to help the children to understand the merits of good behaviour. Good manners and politeness are given very good priority. Consequently, even the youngest children make appropriate use of conventions, such as 'please' and 'thank you'.

The children are forming highly positive views of disability through the influence of different settings and through imaginative use of a very good range of equipment. For example, the children learn about differing abilities when they mix with other children at local toddler groups and school and when they visit friends in hospital. They enjoy playing with detailed small world figures that depict people using aids, such as wheelchairs and walking frames. During role play, they use slings and bandages, with guidance from the childminder, to help them to understand what it feels like to have impaired mobility.

Wall posters, jigsaws and bright, colourful books, such as 'Children of the World' and 'Just Like Me' show the children vibrant images of other aspects of diversity. As well as this, the children wholeheartedly celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year, Halloween, Divali and Christmas. They eat food associated with these occasions, dress up in traditional costumes and decorate the childminder's house. These excellent measures encourage the children to take a pride in their own heritage and to respect and take an interest in that of others.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The childminder goes to great lengths to keep parents as fully informed as possible. For example, individual files are kept for each of the children. These contain photographs of the activities that the children take part in, samples of their paintings and drawings and relevant written information from the childminder, parents, carers and the children themselves. These, along with confidential daily discussions, keep all parties fully informed about the children's progress and their experiences. A parents' notice board contains important information, such as imminent outings and the weekly menu. The childminder seeks and welcomes parents' opinions and views and uses these to meet the needs of individual families as fully as possible. An interesting and very informative set of written policies is given to parents. This keeps them fully aware of the childminder's aims and objectives and helps them to understand her role and responsibilities as a childminder.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Records are meticulous. All records are in place, readily available and reviewed regularly to ensure relevance and accuracy. These underpin the childminder's highly efficient practice. Records are stored in lockable files and are accessed only by the childminder and parents to protect confidentiality. The registration certificate is displayed prominently to allow parents to scrutinise it should they wish to.

The childminder has excellent understanding of maintaining registered numbers. A record is kept of the children's daily attendance. As well as this, the childminder uses a weekly planner so that she is able to see at a glance which children attend on what day. This, alongside the high priority that she gives to health and safety issues, keeps the children in her care very well protected and secure.

The childminder has dedicated an entire room of her house to childminding. Here, the children move around safely and easily in the very well organised environment, which contains child sized, as well as adult sized, furniture. The children access their toys and equipment effortlessly, which encourages them to follow their own interests and preferences and helps them to acquire independence. The childminder's excellent awareness of child development and her very good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework helps her to plan and provide exciting activities for all of the children.

The childminder shows exceptional commitment to further relevant training. For example, courses that she has recently attended include child protection, fire safety, speech and language development, British sign language and inclusive play. The childminder holds a current first aid certificate and has recently acquired a 'Healthy Foundation' award, which focuses on the all-round development of young children. The children themselves have very positive views of the childminder and describe her as 'groovy' and 'great'.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the childminder was asked to improve procedures for informing Ofsted about significant changes. As a result, the childminder writes to Ofsted whenever it is necessary to do so, for example to change a condition of registration. These measures contribute to the children's wellbeing by keeping all relevant parties abreast of the childminder's current circumstances.

Complaints since the last inspection

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. Since 1 April 2004 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 QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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