

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123389
Inspection date	06 June 2007
Inspector	Sarah Catherine Jex

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 1988. She lives with her husband and two children aged 11 and 18 years in the town of Harpenden in Hertfordshire.

The whole of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for six children at any one time and is currently minding five children, all of whom attend on various days throughout the week. The childminder takes and collects children from the local schools, attends the local parent and toddler group and walks children to the local park.

The family has tropical fish as pets.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are able to learn the importance of good personal hygiene from an early age through well organised routines and practice. The childminder is an excellent role model for the children to follow as she talks through the process of washing germs from their hands. She is diligent and consistent in her cleaning and food handling routines and ensures she sustains high levels of hygiene in order to minimise the risk of cross-infections and to protect children's health. Children are protected from infection because the childminder is well informed about their health and employs suitable methods to prevent infections spreading, such as implementing her sick child policy. Information is shared with parents on a regular basis relating to any aspect of their child's health in accordance to the parents wishes. Sound procedures are in place for recording children's accidents or administering medication, parents countersign each entry. This impacts positively on the children's health and well-being. The childminder has a first aid qualification which ensures children remain fully protected.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. They enjoy home cooked meals, which have been planned to meet their preferences and dietary needs. Meals are healthy and nutritious for children. A sample menu demonstrates to the parents the choices of foods that are available. For example, a variety of dishes made with pasta, homemade casseroles, fish and a selection of fresh vegetables. Children have access to drinks throughout the day. At snack time children are able to choose what fruit they would like such as apples or bananas. For babies and younger children their food or milk is brought in from home and is stored correctly in the fridge. The childminder takes account of the wishes of parents and works with them closely to provide nutritious meals and snacks.

Children enjoy an appropriate range of physical activities which contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Their health and development is promoted through their participation in a variety of physical activities such as walking to the local park and playing outside in the garden with a variety of toys. Children are able to play, rest, sleep and be active according to their needs. Children's hand and eye coordination and dexterity is developing as they are introduced to small world figures, jigsaws and creative activities such as painting, cutting and sticking. They are able to fully participate in the activities because the childminder uses her experience and knowledge of child development to adapt these to each child's ability.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. The childminder has a sound awareness of safety. An informal safety assessment is carried out on the premises, toys and activities to ensure potential risks are identified and minimised. Children have access to a broad range of developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are selected according to the children's age and ability to ensure they gain maximum benefit from them. They are easily accessible to the children as they are at their level to be able to see and choose what they would like to play with.

Children actively learn to keep themselves safe because the childminder has clear rules and routines in order to maintain their safety both inside and outside the home. All of the required consents and documentation are in place to support the safety of the children. For example,

children know to hold hands or the buggy when out of the home and to stay together always in sight of the childminder. They learn about the reasons to pick up after themselves to keep things safe for all children playing. Car safety is taught as children have appropriate sized car seats and restraints. Supervision is of a high standard.

The childminder has rigorous procedures in place for the safe collection of children. Parents inform her if the arrangements change at any time. Children are well protected from possible abuse or neglect as the childminder is attentive to her responsibility to protect the children in her care. She has a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms to look for along with the procedures to follow if she had any concerns. She has updated her training in this area to keep abreast of current practice. However, there is no system in place for recording any concerns she may have about a child, therefore this potentially compromises children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly in the friendly, relaxed family atmosphere as they take part in a wide range of activities both in and out of the home. They are learning to be confident, independent and are developing self-esteem by the childminder encouraging them to try new activities and giving lots of praise. They are sociable and relate well to others.

Children have fun with the childminder. She is attentive and affectionate and takes time to listen and talk to the children as she joins in with their play. They have opportunities to think for themselves, express their ideas and thoughts and interact with others by sharing and taking turns. This helps to extend their thinking and promote their development. Children's independence skills are constantly developing as they take part in and initiate child-led activities using their imagination. They receive adult guidance to give them extra support if needed but their independence is promoted as much as possible. The childminder is skilled in listening to the children and introducing new language which they imitate in role play experiences. For example, they enthusiastically act out familiar situations such as looking after the 'baby'. Children's self-esteem and confidence is growing through the consistent support and meaningful praise offered by the childminder.

Children are supported well as the childminder sets them appropriate challenges and provides a range of stimulating and challenging experiences for them. These include imaginative play, being creative and learning new skills in line with their development. The activities are varied and appropriate for the children's development and this enables them to become confident and make progress. For example, children match, sort and sequence patterns, shapes and colours to complete puzzles and shape sorters that are available for different abilities. Children benefit from a range of activities which help develop their knowledge and skills.

The childminder refers to the 'Birth to three matters' framework to consolidate her knowledge and practice. She is adept at understanding the children's needs in order to help them grow and extend their development. Children have warm relationships with the childminder and approach her for physical comfort and reassurance which contributes to their sense of belonging and well-being. The childminder has an excellent knowledge of them as individuals and demonstrates genuine pleasure in their company.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn to respect people from the wider world and of varying abilities. They see positive images that promote race, culture, disability and gender in books, dolls, play figures and puzzles. Children establish a good understanding of their local community as they visit the local parks and other childminders. Children accept each other as individuals with the childminder setting an excellent example by valuing and respecting each child. Children's needs are met in a sympathetic manner through the childminder's open, honest and effective communication with parents and children. She knows the children well and is responsive to their needs. All children, including those who may have additional needs, are highly valued and respected as individuals. Activities are adapted to meet the needs of all children and a sensitive approach ensures children can be fully involved.

Children are aware of and accept the realistic boundaries in place, this impacts positively on their behaviour. They learn to be considerate, share, take turns and are encouraged to remember to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Children respond well to the childminder whilst the high levels of support and consistent strategies help them understand what is acceptable. Children are happy and confident. Their confidence and self-esteem is developed by the praise and encouragement received from the childminder. Children are absorbed and enthusiastic when playing happily and there are smiles, cuddles and other unspoken communication which confirms the happy and relaxed environment they have created between them.

Children benefit from a strong partnership between the childminder and their parents which impacts on the confidence and security of each child. The childminder has time for each parent to discuss their child's day and progress, involving them in their child's care. This helps keep parents well informed of how their child's needs are being met and their developmental progress. A parent's notice board provides additional information such as the childminder's registration certificate, public liability insurance documents and a variety of written policies and procedures which are in place to underpin her practice. Parents are aware of how to make a complaint and a system is in place for recording them. Children's care and development is fostered due to the childminder's commitment to working closely with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from flexible routines which make them feel secure and relaxed. They play, eat, sleep and rest as they need to. Daily routines are organised appropriately and helps encourage the children's confidence and independence. The childminder arranges her time well to ensure children's needs are met and they receive good levels of attention. Children are happy and confident initiating their own activities and sharing and extending this to others, they seek adult support when needed.

The childminder's organisational skills are good and benefit both children and parents. The majority of her documentation and records are maintained in line with the National Standards and are used effectively to promote the care, welfare and learning of each child. The childminder has developed written policies and statements to help keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare which are clearly reflected in her practice. This contributes to the trusting relationships developed between them and on the children's feelings of security. Ratios are met at all times and the childminder has a good awareness of the impact these have on the children's health, safety, socialisation and learning.

The childminder has a professional yet caring and sensitive approach to her practice. She is committed to keeping her knowledge up to date and has attended various training courses. She uses childcare literature and the local authority training leaflets to maintain and improve her skills. She welcomes new ideas and continually strives to develop her practice. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the childminder received the following actions and agreed to: ensure that the contents of the first aid box are sufficient, appropriate and reviewed regularly; ensure that accidents and medicines administered to children are recorded and that parental permission is obtained to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment; review her knowledge and approach to reporting Child Protection concerns, and ensure that local Area Child Protection Committee procedures and Department of Health Guidance.

Since the last inspection the childminder has addressed the actions. A sufficiently stocked first aid box is in place and is reviewed on a regular basis; a system is in place for recording accidents and the administration of medications is in place for each individual child and written parental permission is in place for seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment. This positively promotes the children's welfare and safety. The childminder has completed a child protection course which has enabled her to gain a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms to look for along with obtaining the new Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures to follow if she had any concerns. By having this knowledge and understanding she ensures the well-being and welfare of children is not compromised.

At the last inspection the childminder received the following recommendations and agreed to: provide a range of accessible resources and play materials to address anti-discriminatory good practice; to organise toys for the under twos; and to ensure that all hazards on the first floor are identified and minimised.

Since the last inspection the childminder has addressed the recommendations. A wide range of resources have been acquired which allow children to appreciate each other's similarities and differences and are readily available for children of all ages. Therefore children's awareness of the wider world is sufficiently promoted. Resources for younger children are organised in storage boxes and easily accessible on low-level shelves so children can choose what they want to play with. A daily informal risk assessment is carried out which covers all areas used by the children to ensure all hazards are identified and minimised.

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

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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 a system is in place for accurately recording any concerns about children.

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