



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123487
Inspection date	28 June 2005
Inspector	Karen Molloy

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 1995. She lives with her husband and three children aged 12, 14 and 19 years in St Albans, Hertfordshire. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play. Two of the bedrooms may be used for children to have undisturbed sleep.

The childminder is close to local schools, parks and shops. She regularly attends a local childminding group and takes the children to the library, parks and museums.

The childminder is registered to care for six children under eight years at any one time and is currently childminding six children, all of whom attend on a part time basis. The childminder also cares for children over eight years.

The childminder has two gerbils which the children have access to.

The childminder has an Nursery Nursing Examination Board (NNEB) qualification. She is a network childminder for the St Albans Childminding Network and a childminding 'buddy' for new childminders. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a range of activities which contribute to their good health and help develop their physical skills. Children use the spacious garden on a daily basis to play freely, collect petals, plant seeds or ride a bike. Regular opportunities enable children to walk through nearby woods and visit local parks. Children also support each other, holding hands and helping others to balance and walk along low planks of wood. Children join in the activities enthusiastically.

Children benefit from a healthy and nutritious diet. Mealtimes are seen as a sociable time where children and adults sit together, a time for discussion or time to chat, whilst enjoying their meal. Children are encouraged to try different foods and also to understand others dietary needs/wishes, such as being a vegetarian.

Children's individual dietary needs are met as the childminder takes account of parents wishes and organises snacks and meals that are appropriate and appeal to the children. Parent feedback confirms that children receive a sensible, balanced, healthy diet and children are introduced to new foods. Children play an active part in preparing and cooking food and parents feel this promotes children's understanding of food and nutrition.

Baby food/milk is stored and prepared appropriately.

Children are learning about keeping healthy as they talk with the childminder about sweets and how to look after their teeth.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean and comfortable home, where they are learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care. Children use the toilet independently and wash their hands when necessary. Older children act as good role models, a baby (just turned one year) attempts to blow her nose after watching another child!

Children are able to rest and sleep according to individual routines, as discussed with parents. Babies and young children can sleep peacefully in a cot with their own bedding. Children can be heard via monitors and are regularly checked by the

childminder.

Children are cared for sensitively when unwell. If, when assessed by the childminder they are not well enough to be at her home, this information will be shared with parents. A sickness policy confirms this and helps to prevent the spread of infection. Appropriate documents are maintained.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe environment, where any risks are identified and minimised. A safety checklist and risk assessment supports the good practice. This means children are able to move around safely, freely and independently, which they do.

Whilst out and about, children use suitable car seats and appropriate car insurance is in place.

Children are beginning to learn how to keep themselves safe and can confidently manage the steps into the garden. They have an awareness of the safety of others, making sure the safety gate is closed when a young baby is around. Children are familiar with the house rules, which promote positive behaviour and help to keep them safe, for example, 'no one opens the front door'. Children carry out fire drills with the childminder and all other fire precautions are in place.

Children independently select activities and resources from a wide range of good quality toys and equipment. These are monitored to ensure they are safe, well maintained and appropriate.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted with relevant procedures and documents in place. Children are cared for by a childminder who has a sound understanding of child protection issues. The childminder holds a current First Aid certificate and maintains appropriate accident records.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy, settled and purposefully engaged throughout the morning. They are absorbed in imaginative play for long periods, stopping to find something they need or to add to their game. Children become extremely confident and self assured, playing effectively on their own or with others. Children independently access a wide range of activities and materials around the house. They are shown where other toys are and additional resources, such as treasure baskets, are used with babies and young children.

Children are fully involved and engrossed in a an exciting and extensive range of experiences both indoors and out of the home. They can access imaginative play resources, dressing up clothes, varied and interesting books, play dough, games and

creative activities. Children are presented with exciting new experiences which are developmentally appropriate and provide optimal challenge. They are introduced to new fruits and vegetables on a weekly basis, as a box is delivered to the childminders home. Children are actively encouraged to explore and learn about them 'does it need to be cooked?' 'what is it called?' and use their senses to do so.

Children visit local parks, woods, library, childminding group and local places of interest, such as museums and local market which give them a valuable insight into the wider community and the world around them.

Children's learning is actively promoted through stimulating and challenging activities within the home too. They have the opportunity to paint ceramics, cook and create collages with petals. Children are beginning to recognise and form letters and are encouraged to use these skills to write names on their pictures. Equally, children are given time to relax and unwind when they need to. Children offer their ideas and respond to challenges with enthusiasm.

Children are forming excellent relationships. They relate well to the childminder, chat comfortably, share a joke and are confident to approach the childminder for support or to recall an event. Children's confidence and self esteem is given high priority as they are praised and acknowledged for their efforts and achievements.

Children's independence is fostered as they make their own choices and decisions. They move freely from indoors to the garden and choose their area of play. Children show high levels of involvement, concentration and imagination but are equally supported by the childminder when necessary.

Children benefit from the childminders excellent knowledge of child development and parents confirm this in their feedback 'regular discussions about the children's development', 'invaluable insights' and 'childminder has a high level of understanding of the children's needs'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for by a childminder who values and develops a very good partnership with parents. This means she is able to meet children's individual needs and include them in the life of the setting. Children are valued and respected as individuals, time is invested in finding out about each child, their likes, dislikes and routines. Children are settled according to the needs of the family, the lead taken from parents. Families benefit from information that is shared regularly on all aspects of the children's care. This may be verbally or recorded in a daily diary.

The childminder has developed a file of information that relates to the National Childminding Standards and outcomes. Much of this information is shared with parents and the childminders ensures they are kept up to date with any current issues, for example, the inspection process.

Children's and parents needs are met as feedback from them is gained through

questionnaires given to them by the childminder. Excellent comments from parents includes; ' a hard working diligent and caring childminder, she is sensitive and supportive, the children feel safe and happy in her care, I can't think of any way of improving the care, helpful in discussing any concerns and excellent childcare'.

Children behave well and play together harmoniously in a calm and settled environment. They learn by having positive role models (older children and the childminder) they understand the clear and consistent boundaries and are motivated by plenty of praise. Distraction is used and children given explanations or a reminder about certain behaviour. Opportunities are made to discuss and work through any difficulties.

Children's understanding of the wider world is enhanced as they are provided with a range of resources and activities that reflect diversity. Chopsticks and rice bowls are introduced to role play, fabrics and books provided and children involved in discussions around different cultures. Children respect and are beginning to understand the needs of others, for example the young baby or the child with specific dietary needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children move around freely and are relaxed in their environment. They are confident to initiate their own play and make choices, yet still approach the childminder for support or reassurance. Children's routine is organised so they are aware of what is coming next. This is also flexible to allow for children's individual needs, moods and other factors to be taken into account. The childminder places importance on providing a 'calm, prepared and planned atmosphere to the setting' for children.

Policies and procedures are used effectively and support the good practice that is in place. Information (including a parent pack) is shared regularly with parents to keep them well informed and up to date. This contributes to continuity in the children's care. Contracts and passwords are used and reviewed termly. All other relevant documentation is in place.

Children benefit from the increased knowledge of the childminder, who has completed a number of training courses/workshops. These cover topics such as heuristic play, behaviour management, social interaction and self esteem, Foundation Stage and speech and language development. The childminder is aware of 'Birth to three matters' (a framework to support children in their earliest years) and has identified this as an area for further development.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the childminder has improved the children's safety. She has removed the re chargeable screwdriver from the cupboard and made the side gate

and bathroom lock safe.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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):

- enhance the already good practice of children under three, for example, through use of the Birth to three framework.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk