

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507204
Inspection date	17 March 2008
Inspector	Amanda Jane Tyson

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 1993. She is currently caring for four children aged under eight years; two of whom are aged under two, one is aged three, and one aged four who attends full time school. She lives with her husband and two children, aged 15 and 11 years in Cobham, Surrey. Childminding mostly takes place in a purposefully organised playroom that has its own front entry door. When more than one child is present, the lounge is used for children to sleep in cots. There is a kitchen, ground floor cloakroom and enclosed garden available for outdoor play.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The childminder's well thought through settling-in policy for new children demonstrates her secure understanding of parent-child attachment issues. She visits children in their own home before they visit her environment. She gathers a wealth of information from parents about children's usual routines, practical care, and health needs, to enable her to provide consistent care. A gradual process begins whereby parents leave children with her for increasing periods.

This ensures sufficient time for children to become secure in their new environment, and in the knowledge that parents will return. The childminder creates an environment that fosters a strong sense of belonging in children. They have their own cot and she buys each new child a welcome gift; for babies and toddlers this is usually a soft toy for them to take to bed. Each child has their own coat peg and bag so that they have somewhere of their own to keep their personal belongings.

Parents provide children's bottle feeds and meals and the childminder keeps them well informed about their daily consumption and developing nutritional needs. She makes sure that they keep well hydrated with regular drinks of water and offers morning snacks of fruit, and a biscuit after school. Children benefit from the childminder's family-style eating arrangements whereby she sits with the children to encourage good table manners and social conversation. The childminder exploits these daily opportunities to engage children in discussions about nutrition and diverse foods. Good use is made of the garden and the childminder takes children out to play parks and natural wide open spaces everyday. Children therefore have good opportunities to run, climb and balance and benefit from plenty of fresh air which helps to build their immunity from common childhood illnesses.

The childminder adapts the day to take account of children's well-being needs, for instance, rather than take a teething, and therefore irritable baby to a toddler group, she stays home where they are more comfortable. The childminder has recently updated her first aid training and is therefore well equipped to respond to certain emergency situations and to treat minor injuries. Accidents and administered 'prescribed' medication are recorded and the entries are signed in acknowledgement by parents at the end of the day. However, non prescription medication is detailed in the daily diary rather than the medication book. This means that when daily diaries are taken home by parents, the childminder is not in possession of the record.

Children have their own cot and hand drying towel so that they do not need to share. The childminder takes a changing mat and potty with her on outings, so that they do not have to use public facilities. She regularly cleans/sterilizes her toys and makes sure that she takes children to toddler groups with equally good standards of hygiene. This, along with her policy on the exclusion of children with contagious illness, helps to prevent the spread of infection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well maintained, secure, very attractive and child orientated environment. The childminder operates a robust policy on the collection of children; they are only released to adults known to her and when the arrangements have been agreed with the regular parent beforehand. The childminder keeps her front door locked and the garden is secured with good quality fencing to prevent children leaving unsupervised. A good range of colourful manufactured toys are attractively presented within the play room, for example, a role play and library area, and on low level shelving so that children can help themselves. Children benefit from a range of outdoor play equipment, such as a sand trough, play house, bikes and push-a-longs. The childminder has enough cots to enable children to sleep at the same time, there are highchairs, nursery sized tables and both double and single pushchairs. Parents provide children's car seats, to ensure that they meet individual preferences and expectations.

Fire safety is well considered. The childminder checks her smoke detector regularly to ensure it remains in good working order and older children know what to do and where to go if it goes

off. Good precautions are ensured to support children's safety whilst on outings. A risk assessment is conducted on places before taking children. Walkers wear reins, she carries a mobile telephone and children wear wrist bands with her name and number detailed; in the unlikely event that they did become misplaced, but found by a responsible adult, a speedy reunion is more likely. Children's welfare is safeguarded by the childminder's secure understanding of the procedure to follow if she is concerned about a child. Their well-being and development is closely monitored through record keeping. This means that possible concerns can be recognised through emerging patterns and therefore promptly acted upon.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a very good variety of daily activities that encourage and support their play and learning. The development of musical skills is encouraged through weekly attendance at an under fives music group, where children participate in singing and action rhyme games, and make and use musical instruments. Children have access to different toys and activities and enjoy socialising with peers at the local toddler group. Regular trips to country parks, where there are trees to climb, plenty of space for running around and a wealth of items to collect, such as leaves, conkers and even snails, are exhilarating and highly worthwhile experiences for all children, including babies who show interest in the trees as they move in the wind.

The childminder understands that after a busy day in a school environment, reception aged children are tired and in need of a snack and a drink before anything else. They then benefit from having free access to resources in a comfortable and stimulating environment. The childminder recognises the differences between children and adapts activities to meet children's needs. This is well demonstrated by the adaptations made to Easter activities, to include alternatives for those 'less keen' to make cards, and how she responds to children's requests for help to achieve their own goals, such as rope climbing.

Children are inspired by the presentation of the 'play-kitchen' with its good variety of imitation home accessories, dolls and dressing up costumes. This enables children to act out their real and imaginary experiences. They build and assemble with construction and the train set, and create and design using paint, playdough, glue and scissors. Mathematical and literacy skills are supported and encouraged during play. Children weigh cooking ingredients, experiment with volume and capacity during water play, count money in shop play, and label and caption their own pictures. Children benefit from having access to an extensive selection of books and from the childminder's interest in sharing these with children individually and together.

The childminder's playful interactions and 'snuggle times' with babies encourages communication skills. They watch, listen and respond to the different tones of her voice. The childminder makes sure that they have frequent opportunities to be physically active on the floor, for example, kicking their legs, waving their arms around and reaching for interesting toys. They enjoy daily walks out where there is always plenty to see. The childminder has a wide range of colourful and good quality baby and toddler toys, many of which that encourage repetition and understanding of cause and effect. For example, pressing, pulling or shaking something to create different sounds or actions. This is highly beneficial to children. However, most of these toys are made from plastic, which when touched, feel the same. Opportunities for babies to explore the different textures of natural and everyday objects are not fully exploited.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

High levels of professional and friendly communication with parents ensures consistency and continuity of care for children. A daily diary, which goes back and forth between them provides a summary of children's day, including what activities they have enjoyed, milestones achieved and a general description of their disposition. The childminder pays excellent attention to explaining her operational practice and regulatory responsibilities to parents before contracts are signed. Some of these are documented within policies and procedures, but not all. With one exception, clearly due to an administrative oversight, written agreements clarify parental wishes in relation to a wide variety of situations. This includes consent for the childminder to seek emergency treatment or advice, to administer temperature reducing medication following a telephone call to parents first, and to take children on local outings.

Children's awareness of diversity, within their immediate and wider world, is raised as they meet people within the local community, and as they access play resources which promote positive images of ethnicity, gender and disability. Through spontaneous discussions and planned creative activities, such as during Easter and Passover, children are helped to value the religious beliefs of others, as well as their own. The childminder's knowledge and understanding of child development is highly secure. She spends time observing children at play. As a result, possible developmental concerns are promptly identified. This, along with communicative and trusting relationships she builds with parents, means that children benefit from early interceptive support. Inspiring acts of thoughtfulness, such as taking children to buy a tree to plant in her garden to acknowledge a special memory, are typical of the steps the childminder takes to support children's emotional development.

Helpful behaviour and good manners are encouraged through daily routines, such as tidying away one set of toys before getting out another, and sitting nicely to the table for meals. The childminder praises children for their efforts and achievements, and her gentle explanations help them to understand the concept of right and wrong, and reasons for certain rules, such as safety. Her secure knowledge and understanding of the children as individuals, means that she recognises and handles their schemas sensitively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The childminder provides a well organised and stimulating play and learning environment for children. Play areas are clearly defined, for instance, a library area and role play and the storage of toys on accessible low level shelving encourages children's independence. The childminder demonstrates a commitment towards professional development. She is qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in child care, has renewed her first aid certificate, updated her Child Protection training, and begun to prepare for the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Records and documentation that are required to promote and support children's welfare, care and development are, with the exception of one oversight, all in place and shared very well with parents. The availability of written policies and procedures is a developing feature of very good practice, and the daily diary is particularly useful for parents. The childminder's plans to expand on this, with a system for using her observations of the children's developmental progress, to inform assessments will provide further benefits for children. The childminder meets the needs of the range of children for whom she provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection raised one recommendation for improvement, which was to ensure the accessibility of required records on the premises at all times. Mostly this is achieved, but a further recommendation is raised in relation to the system for recording administered non prescription medication.

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.

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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):

- improve record keeping and consider further developing policies and procedures; ensure that the record of non-prescription medication and treatment administered to children is kept on the premises at all times, and that required health consents are obtained for all 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