

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	201919
Inspection date	10 September 2007
Inspector	Janette Elaina Lockwood
Type of inspection	Integrated
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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The childminder was registered in 1995. She lives with her husband, who is also her assistant, and their three adult children in Wickford in Essex. The whole of the house is registered and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time and is currently minding four children between the ages of one and five years and one child aged over eight years. In addition, the childminder is registered for two children for overnight care. The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children and attends a childminding group.

The childminder is a member of an approved childminding network and is currently in receipt of funding for early education for three and four-year-olds.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The childminder provides a very healthy and hygienic environment for children by keeping her home very clean. She takes positive steps to minimise cross-infection between children by providing separate cots and bed linen for them and in addition, children have their own changing mats. The children learn about personal hygiene because the childminder promotes regular hand washing routines at key times during the day, reminding children of the reasons for doing so. In this way, they begin to take some responsibility for their own personal hygiene.

The children are cared for properly if they are taken ill or have an accident whilst with the childminder. She has a written sickness and accident policy to follow and has written permission from parents to administer medication. Although the childminder has obtained permission for some emergency treatment the wording is inconsistent with the National Standards. Accident and medication records are well kept and up-to-date to ensure children's care is appropriate.

Children are well nourished and offered very healthy choices in their food, for example, fresh fruit and vegetables, some of which are home-grown. The childminder talks to children and encourages them to help her to grow the fruit and vegetables and to prepare them properly for eating so they learn about food hygiene as well as the benefits of eating healthy foods. The childminder has undertaken a food hygiene training course and uses this knowledge to ensure she is preparing and storing food in a healthy manner for children. Drinks are readily available to children throughout the day so they do not become dehydrated.

Children have daily opportunities to gain fresh air and exercise, as the childminder encourages them to walk to and from school, as well as to toddler groups, for example. She regularly takes children to the park to give them further opportunities to run about and use the large apparatus, helping them to develop their large muscle skills and stamina. Children have plenty of opportunities to practise their fine motor skills and learn to manipulate tools and objects, such as utensils, pencils and paint brushes. In addition, there is a wide range of small world toys to play with so children learn to use their hand-eye co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The childminder keeps her home very well maintained and organised with children in mind so they can play and learn in safety and comfort both, inside the house and in the fully enclosed garden. The children are able to use toilet facilities downstairs so they can become more independent in their personal hygiene. The childminder is registered for overnight care and understands the extra safety precautions she needs to take for the upstairs of the home when children are staying overnight.

The children have access to a wide range of very good quality equipment which the childminder uses imaginatively to encourage children's play and learning. She thinks carefully about the equipment and how she can use it imaginatively to inspire children in their play and provides

additional resources, such as a large board for children to put their puzzles on. The equipment is very well-organised into labelled boxes which are accessible to children so they can make their own choices. When the childminder buys any new equipment or furniture for her home she considers the children's safety, for example, when recently buying a new garden table she thought carefully about the design in relation to children.

The childminder is mindful of helping children to be safe in an emergency and practises fire safety drills with them, reassuring them and discussing ways in which they can help themselves to be safe. She takes them to 'safety fun days' where the children can learn about people that help us and take part in activities to show them ways they can help keep themselves safe. Furthermore, children are learning road safety everyday as the childminder reminds them of the dangers of traffic and how to cross the road properly.

The childminder carries out a full risk assessment on her home and backs this up with visual checks everyday, for example, before children use the garden. She reviews the safety of her home as the children grow and develop so she knows what they are capable of and assesses what to do to ensure their continued safety.

The childminder has undertaken child protection training and is very aware of how she can safeguard children. She understands her responsibilities and records any existing injuries to discuss with parents. The childminder has a child protection policy, information to refer to and relevant telephone numbers so she is capable of acting on any concerns she may have in order to safeguard children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The childminder has a wealth of experience in caring for children and plans exciting activities for the children under three years using the 'Birth to three matters' framework as her guide. She skilfully incorporates activities that appeal to both babies and toddlers in her planning, to give them a wide range of experiences to help them explore and begin to make sense of their world. For example, a box of musical instruments inspires their curiosity as learners, as they take them out one by one and discover what they can do with them. The childminder knows the children well and what will interest them, taking account of their individual stages of development and their personal needs and wants. She is careful to include babies in all aspects of the routine, thinking carefully about what they can achieve, for example, in a painting activity.

The childminder cleverly engages different aged children in activities, such as looking at books with textures: talking to them about what they can feel; asking the more able children questions that make them think, and giving them plenty of time to answer. She uses her knowledge of the children, including information from their parents, to plan activities that help them to talk about issues that may worry them.

Early Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The childminder has a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. She uses a range of teaching methods from learning

through everyday routines and activities, such as helping to prepare food, to planned activities focussing on particular areas of learning. The childminder consistently talks to the children extending their learning into all areas so that a simple task, such as buttering bread, can lead to talk of healthy eating, shapes and counting, for example.

Although the childminder uses written plans, she also encourages children to choose toys and activities themselves so that they instigate their own play at times. The plans are concise, but organised so that the childminder identifies a learning intention using the stepping stones and describes how she can deliver an activity to help children progress. She always takes account of children's individual learning needs, special events in their lives and details differentiation to enable children to work at their own pace. Accurate assessments help the childminder to plan for children's next steps in learning. Children benefit from the childminder's good interaction and support, for example, when attempting a particularly large puzzle. However, the childminder is aware of times to let the children take control of their play and therefore knows when to stand back.

The childminder compiles separate folders for each child containing examples of all their work along with photographic evidence to show how they are progressing. She writes regular evaluative assessments on different aspects of their learning such as their speaking and listening skills.

Children are becoming confident and independent as they help the childminder with simple everyday tasks, such as helping pick and wash tomatoes for their lunch. They approach the childminder with ease and demonstrate their sense of belonging through knowing what comes next in their day. Children are settled and show their trust with the childminder as they look to her for affirmation and support when tackling something new or challenging.

Children use language for thinking and sometimes narrate to themselves as they play, for example, with small world equipment or when painting. They have frequent opportunities to practise their pre-reading skills when looking at books with the childminder or looking for labels on toy boxes. She helps them spell out their names or those of their peers but sometimes uses the letter names rather than the phonetic sounds which may confuse children at this early age. The childminder provides children with new challenges to help them with emergent writing and to begin to write their names when they are ready.

The childminder uses everyday routines to help children to learn numbers as labels and for counting, for example, when they walk to school she encourages the children to look at and identify the numbers on the lamp posts. Children are beginning to recognise numerals and some numbers of personal significance such as how old they are. The childminder helps children to learn about shape, space and measure, for example, cutting their toast into rectangles or triangles or comparing sizes.

Children show their natural curiosity as learners, as the childminder asks them questions to help them to describe things, or notice and comment on whether things are the same or different. For example, encouraging children to make pairs of items. There are planned activities to help children learn about nature through planting seeds and caring for plants, and through this they

learn about how things can change. The childminder provides equipment, such as computer toys, so children can begin to learn about technology and how it can be used to help us.

The children have plenty of planned and spontaneous activities to help them explore their creativity. They use a range of imaginative toys, such as dressing up clothes and play food, to act out different characters and situations, helping them to make sense of what goes on around them. The childminder provides musical instruments for them to explore and as well as their listening skills they use their other senses to respond in a variety of ways to what they see, smell, touch and feel.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The childminder is extremely careful to consider all children's individual backgrounds and to actively help them learn about each other. For example, the children make flags to represent the countries of their families so they can begin to learn and compare some of their home traditions. This helps children to talk confidently about their homes and families so they learn to value others. The childminder encourages children to socialise and mix with others in the local community through regularly attending the library and the toddler group for example. When planning activities the childminder skilfully incorporates multicultural festivals so that children learn aspects of different cultures. She has an excellent range of resources that reflect people's similarities and differences and is confident to talk to children and answer questions they may ask.

The childminder has valuable experience in caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and has attended many courses to help her care for children properly according to their individual needs. She clearly understands the importance of being open with parents so she can discuss any identified needs and liaise with specialists. She is committed to an inclusive practice to ensure children are included and so that individuals can progress to the best of their ability.

Children behave very well in response to the childminder's positive management of their behaviour. If children have a dispute, she gives them thoughtful choices and offers them alternatives so they feel that they have some control over what happens next. The childminder takes children's levels of understanding into consideration when managing behaviour, for example, using distraction techniques with younger children. Children are given frequent praise and encouragement so they develop very good self-esteem and in turn they show this in their good behaviour.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. The childminder regularly discusses children's progress towards the early learning goals with their parents and has good evidence to show them what their child is learning during their time with her. She actively encourages parents to look at the folders and writes regular informative reports for them so they can really get a sense of how their children are moving through the stepping stones. The childminder makes time to speak to parents about their child's achievements and to discuss their next steps in learning.

The childminder builds an excellent relationship with parents by giving them abundant relevant information about her practices. She discusses children's individual needs so that she can work closely with them to overcome any problems and in addition, she supplies them with clearly written information she gathers about childcare. The childminder writes daily diaries for the younger children to share with their parents, so they are kept highly informed of their child's day. As most children are collected by their parents at different times during the day, the childminder has time to speak to the parents individually to keep them up-to-date. The childminder has a well-written complaints procedure which she shows to parents and this includes the address and telephone number of Ofsted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and education is enriched by the childminder's enthusiasm. She is motivated and has attended a wealth of courses to help her broaden her knowledge of the Foundation Stage and to provide good quality learning activities for children receiving nursery education. Her thorough understanding of how children learn enables children to progress steadily towards the early learning goals.

The childminder is committed to keeping up-to-date with current childcare practices through being accredited and regularly meeting with other childminders. She is aware of her conditions of registration and works occasionally with an assistant who has been appropriately checked. The childminder organises her time, space and resources very well for children to ensure their individual needs are met effectively. She continues to be registered for overnight care and understands the additional requirements she needs to meet to continue this. The childminder has been chosen to care for children of young parents as part of the Essex Teenage Parent Project and is a support childminder. In addition she has set up and runs a local childminder group giving children opportunities to socialise and for mutual support of the childminders involved.

All essential documentation is systematically organised and meets the requirements of the National Standards. Her clearly written policies and procedures underpin the care given and promote children's health, safety and enjoyment. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the childminder was required to ensure there is an effective system to inform parents of the complaints procedure and to ensure it includes Ofsted's contact details.

The childminder has reviewed her complaints procedure and has included the contact details of Ofsted so that parents may influence the care of the children.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children are gaining a phonic awareness of the letters of the alphabet.

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