

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	403031
Inspection date	23 November 2007
Inspector	Ann Marie Lefevre
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 has been registered since 1994. She is approved to mind a maximum of six children at a time. There are currently eight children attending, one full-time and the rest part-time or for out of school care.

The household consists of the childminder, her husband and their three children aged over 16 years. Their home is a farmhouse in rural Northumberland, the nearest village is Chathill. The setting is a short drive from shops, schools and other local amenities. Minded children have access to the living room, dining room, dining kitchen and bathroom on the ground floor. A further reception room and the utility room on the ground floor and the first floor rooms are not used for minding purposes. The main entrance to the rear leads directly onto the farm complex and is used for access to the premises. There is a fully enclosed front garden for supervised play. The family has six dogs, which are housed in kennels and a rabbit and a guinea pig which are also housed outdoors. There is an indoor tank with pet fish.

Children are taken to local amenities on a regular basis. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected as the childminder ensures that their health, hygiene and dietary needs are met. They are able to develop their awareness of health and hygiene in their daily routines and activities as well as from the good example set by the childminder. Children are actively encouraged to take responsibility as they gain age appropriate awareness of why it is important to wash their hands before handling food or after going to the toilet and after messy play. They use liquid soap and clean towels to minimise cross-infection. They benefit from being in premises which are clean and comfortable. In addition, children are asked to keep their play space tidy before lunch and are keen to help put small items away. They benefit from the positive guidance and encouragement provided by the childminder.

The childminder sees that children benefit from being cared for in a healthy environment. Children's health requirements are highlighted in the well organised records and in other relevant information. Accident and medication recording systems are in place and maintained in line with the Ofsted standards; the childminder is fully aware of how these are to be kept. There is a well stocked first aid kit in place which is replenished and checked to ensure that items are within their use by date. The childminder has recently updated her first aid training. Children develop their understanding of maintaining a healthy body, for example, they learn about dressing appropriately for the different weather conditions throughout the year.

Children benefit as the childminder has a clear understanding of healthy eating and ensures they have a balanced diet. Children enjoy a variety of fresh fruit at snack time. Varied lunches, such as spaghetti, apple and yoghurt, are also provided by the childminder. Parents may provide packed lunches if they prefer. Children are encouraged to have regular drinks of water or juice without added sugar. Further drinks are available during each session. Children sit comfortably at the table with the childminder to enjoy a relaxed social occasion during meal times. The childminder has strategies in place to ensure that any special dietary needs are met effectively. Children also have opportunities to see how food arrives on the table during simple cookery activities. The childminder's home is located on a farm so children are able to see how animals are cared for during their regular walks. They also help collect eggs from the hens.

Children develop their physical and emotional well-being in a wide range of exciting indoor and outdoor activities. They are able to gain lots of exercise and fresh air from supervised outdoor play in the garden where they can have energetic fun. Children may visit a local beach or shops, but mainly have many country walks as the farm setting is ideal for children to extend their learning and participate in exercise. They enjoy going out after it has been raining and splashing in puddles. They also have many opportunities to socialise with other children and adults during their outings.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children freely and safely access a variety of good quality equipment and toys. Children are reminded to be careful when using equipment. They respond well to guidance about the safe use of these resources. They are protected as the childminder ensures that the toys, equipment and furniture are in a sound and clean condition by checking items regularly. Soft toys are

washed in the washing machine. She ensures that the play resources are appropriate for the age and stage of development of each child.

Children develop their sense of independence as they use the designated childcare areas with good, age-appropriate supervision and guidance from the childminder. The premises are welcoming and well organised for children to use safely. The childminder actively encourages children to be aware of hazards, both inside and outside the home, in daily routines and in activities. They are helped to understand about road safety when near traffic and about farm safety during their walks in the rural setting.

The childminder has taken many safety measures in relation to the premises. Hazardous materials are kept out of child reach, a safety gate is in place to the bottom of the stairs and electric sockets are covered. However, the main exit door is not always secured effectively. The childminder plans to replace safety film to one pane of window glass which is starting to become a little worn. Effective steps have been taken in relation to fire safety. A fireguard is securely fitted to the fireplace, the fire blanket is located on the kitchen wall for ease of use, smoke detectors are fitted and there is a written fire safety policy in place.

Children's welfare is promoted well by the childminder having documentation in place in relation to safety. Current public liability insurance has been obtained. A written child protection policy is in place and the childminder has participated in child protection training. Although there have been no concerns to date, the childminder has a clear understanding of child protection procedures, what signs to be aware of, who to contact and what to record if she has concerns in the future. Therefore, children are protected in her care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children learn effectively and develop their knowledge and skills in lots of fun and imaginative ways. They clearly thrive and develop well as they have many opportunities to enjoy a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities. There is an good balance of resources in the setting so that children may pursue their individual interests as well as participate in group activities. The childminder ensures that activities are suitable for the age range and stage of development of each child.

Children use an assortment of art and craft materials, for example, to create pictures and make cards. They also gain practical life experience as they participate in walks around the farm and learn to appreciate how animals develop. They also join in measuring and mixing activities as they do simple cookery, such as making and icing buns. Children develop their understanding of number recognition, dimension, the written and spoken word, colour and shape, through exciting games of pretend, songs and stories. They may choose from construction toys, puzzles, books, soft toys and many other playthings which promote and reinforce learning.

The childminder is very calm and affectionate as she works with the children. She demonstrates that she values them and has a clear understanding of how they learn and develop. Children benefit as the childminder is skilled at using a range of methods to promote and reinforce learning, for example, as she initiates and encourages discussions to help them extend their knowledge and awareness. The childminder helps children to develop their vocabulary by using clear and simple language. She is adept in explaining, so that children are helped to understand events and activities. There is a sound knowledge of each child and the wishes of parents, to ensure there is consistency and continuity for children to progress and learn effectively.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop their awareness of equal opportunities and respecting individual needs from the childminder's positive attitude. There are many ways for children to develop a greater understanding of their local community during outings. Children participate in activities relating to familiar celebrations, such as Christmas when they make crackers, cards and calendars and at Easter when they make baskets. There are a few opportunities to learn about the wider world and other cultures as children eat food which originates in other countries, such as pizzas and pineapple. There are some books and toys which reflect differing cultures and backgrounds.

Children are encouraged to be polite and well behaved. They learn about sharing and valuing others from the good role model provided by the childminder. She gently and sensitively guides and encourages them in daily routines and activities, which helps children to develop their self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging. The childminder actively encourages children to share their opinions and make decisions. Children are provided with age-appropriate challenges and respond well to guidance from the childminder, consequently they participate fully during each session.

Parents are fully involved in planning for the care of their children and the exchange of information necessary for their child's positive development. The childminder keeps them up to date in relation to daily activities and events as well as health and safety issues. There is a file of information which includes policies, procedures and other valuable contents relating to the service provided. The childminder keeps a diary for parents, if they wish, in relation to their child; these would usually be kept if the parent has limited contact with the childminder. In addition, children share their experiences with parents as they may take lots of art and craft work home to show what they have achieved.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the childminder's very focussed, caring and calm approach in her contact with children. This is reflected in the way she has organised childcare areas in her home, in the stimulating activities provided and in the many effective health and safety measures taken. The childminder is aware of the desirability of undertaking training and has completed first aid, child protection and treasure basket courses.

Clearly defined and sensitive daily routines enable children to settle well and feel secure in the setting. The recording systems are generally well maintained. Good accident and medication records, contracts and child detail sheets are in place. The daily register is mainly kept as each child arrives and again as each child departs, however, some entries are made in advance at times which may not accurately reflect child attendance. A useful file of information has been developed in relation to the Ofsted standards; this is used to inform the childminder and parents and carers.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one recommendation made at the last inspection in relation to developing the existing multicultural play opportunities for children. This has been partially met as children now have some additional opportunities to try food that originates in other countries.

Complaints since the last inspection

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 provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by the 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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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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 that the entrance door is secured when minded children are present so that they do not leave the premises without adult supervision
- ensure that the register of children's attendance reflects minding times as they occur and is not completed in advance.

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