

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	496676
Inspection date	11 January 2008
Inspector	Kim Wailling
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 outstanding. 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 2001. She lives with her husband in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The whole of the house, except the master bedroom, is used for childminding purposes. There is a fully enclosed garden for outside play. The family have a pet tortoise.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time and is currently minding three children under five and one child over eight on a part-time basis. The childminder walks to the local school to take and collect children.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's good health is very well promoted as the childminder has in place highly effective systems and ways of working which ensure that individual health needs are met. Parents, for example, are asked to complete individual profile sheets about their children, recording health concerns and possible food allergies. These are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The childminder takes time to talk to parents about when it is appropriate to exclude children who

are ill or infectious so that general agreements are reached. The childminder has an excellent knowledge of nutrition. Children are frequently offered drinks and have a choice of snacks, which includes fruit. The childminder works closely with parents of infants under two to ensure that their dietary needs are met. Mealtimes are fun and children are encouraged to enjoy a wide range of different tastes. As a result, children develop good appetites and are well nourished. Consequently, children's health and well-being are very effectively protected.

Children are helped to develop personal independence skills such as hand washing, which are carefully supervised by the childminder. Toilet training is relaxed and incorporated into the children's daily routine. Praise and encouragement is constantly offered and children respond very well. Children's health, if they have an accident, is fully safeguarded. The childminder holds a current first aid certificate and documentation is kept to record accidents, which is clearly written and shared with parents. There is a well stocked first aid kit to deal with any minor injuries to children. This is frequently checked and the contents replenished on a regular basis.

Children can rest and sleep according to their needs. The daily routine is exceptionally well organised to fit in with children's individual sleep patterns. For example, children who do not require a sleep are offered a quiet time with the childminder sharing stories. In addition, there is space in the childminder's home for children under two to be offered undisturbed sleep. As a result, children are well rested and content.

Children are offered outstanding opportunities to develop their physical skills. Children have use of the childminder's garden which has been designed to facilitate children's play. Excellent use is made of nearby open spaces and events such as sports days are organised. Children have use of a wide range of equipment, including a box of small equipment such as quoits, bats, balls and cones, which the childminder is using to extend children's physical skills. Although the childminder has a car, she prefers to walk with the children so that they enjoy the benefits being in the fresh air. Walks are taken throughout the year so that children, for example, can experience splashing through puddles and playing in the snow. Overall, children's physical development is exceptionally well fostered in a systematic and highly enjoyable way.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in a safe, stimulating, child-friendly environment which the childminder has created for children in her family home. Carefully planned adaptations, such as constructing radiator covers and appropriate use of stair gates, have been made so that children can move around safely. Furniture and storage of toys has been creatively arranged to create uncluttered spaces so that children have ample room for play. There is an excellent balance of toys and resources, including for younger children sensory play materials. On a daily basis children use a good range of equipment, including everyday household items such as child sized tables and chairs, that are of good quality, safe and scrupulously clean. In addition, the childminder's garden is very well-maintained so that possible hazards to children are minimised and it can be used throughout the year.

The childminder is aware of the need to be vigilant and ensures that at all times children are in sight or hearing. High priority is given to helping children understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, emergency evacuation procedures are practised and role play is effectively used with the children to promote traffic awareness. In addition when on outings the use of fluorescent visibility jackets further promote children's safety. Children's welfare is fully

protected. The childminder has a very good understanding of child protection issues. This is supported by documentation that follows recently issued guidelines from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All records, policies and procedures that are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision are kept. These are systematically updated to ensure that children's welfare, care and learning is promoted at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are settled and are making excellent progress in their learning. The childminder has created a lively learning environment for children in her home which fully supports children's learning through play. The structure of daily routine is built around the children's interests and offers a wide variety of worthwhile activities. For example, for older children, events such as concerts and sports days are arranged and take place supporting charity appeals which the children nominate. Children regard the childminder as a 'playmate' and spontaneously include her in their play. As a result, secure relationships quickly develop that effectively supports children's enjoyment and achievements.

Younger children's learning is exceptionally well promoted as the childminder has an excellent understanding of how children learn. For example, the structure of the daily routine has a good balance of child-led and adult-led activities so that children are constantly busy and having fun. Infants, in particular, show eager interest in the excellent range of interactive toys on offer. Role play is imaginatively resourced and attractively stored so that artefacts are freely available to children throughout the day. This means that children can initiate their own play, evolving their own games such as creating a grocery shop, which are satisfying and rewarding to them. In addition, indoor and outdoor toys are frequently rotated so that an interesting and enriching environment is created for children each week.

The childminder is very aware of children's individual needs and sensitively fosters their overall development. Children who are experiencing learning difficulties and disabilities receive a high level of support as the childminder works closely with their parents to ensure that good strategies are in place to maximise their development. Children's achievements are celebrated. The childminder keeps a journal for each child which is composed of succinct observations that build up a wonderful picture of the children's day. In addition a portfolio of children's art work supplemented by photographs of children 'at play' is kept as a record of children's progress. Children take these home at the end of each term to share with their parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued and as a result positive and caring relationships are formed. Children play happily together as social skills, such as sharing, are encouraged. Children are helped to manage their own behaviour as the childminder has an excellent understanding of behaviour strategies. For example, asking older children to think about the consequences of their actions, seeking children's opinions and involving them in decision making. This means that children behave well, cooperate with each other, are beginning to learn right from wrong and feel actively involved.

Children's individual needs are known and met to a high degree. The childminder uses information gained from relevant childcare websites to keep herself informed to enable her to successfully support children's development. In addition, she has undertaken further training, such

as baby signing, in response to individual children's needs. Children's self-esteem is fostered and they are helped to gain an understanding of the local and wider community. For example, play materials are carefully chosen to represent positive images of boys and girls, men and woman from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, resources for older children such as maps and atlases are used to extend children's knowledge about the wider world. Children are taken on outings to places of interest and effective use of photographs enable children to recall and reflect on these events.

Children gain much benefit from the extremely good partnership with parents who are made welcome and quickly feel part of the childminder's 'extended family'. A good amount of written information is shared, which ensures that children's needs are fully met. Parents have a great deal of confidence in the care that the childminder offers their children and have written complimentary letters of recommendation. The childminder ensures that parents have easy access to the extensive range of procedures written and followed which supports her practice. This includes a complaints procedure which is in line with National Standard requirements. Overall, very good arrangements to settle children into the childminder's care in place are negotiated taking into account the needs of children and the requirements of parents for flexible childcare. From this, a reciprocal relationship between the childminder, parents and children quickly develops. Consequently, children are well-supported in the transition between home and the childminder. Subsequently, children quickly feel happy and secure in the childminder's care become confident and make excellent progress in their overall development.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Overall children's needs are met. Their care, enjoyment and learning are greatly enhanced by the exceptional organisation of the childminder. For example, the childminder meticulously plans and prepares innovative, interesting and age-appropriate play activities for children. She is conscientious in her approach to 'paper work' working over and beyond her childminding hours to ensure that she remains completely up-to-date. These organisational factors indicate that children's care and well-being are given a high priority to ensure that children are happy and fully supported in reaching their full potential.

Children benefit considerably from the very high commitment of the childminder to their care and development. She is undertaking independent study with the Open University to increase her knowledge about child development and makes very good use of childcare websites to keep herself well-informed. In addition, the childminder has a sound understanding of what she does well and has identified areas that she plans to develop. This combined with her enthusiasm and the genuine love of her job means that children's needs are consistently met. Overall, her commitment to providing the best possible outcomes for all children is exemplary.

Improvements since the last inspection

The childminder has systematically developed the good childcare practice noted on the last inspection visit, including reviewing how play activities are evaluated. As a result of this proactive approach the quality of care that the childminder now offers children is outstanding.

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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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