



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123431
Inspection date	10 October 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 1989. She lives with her husband and three children, two adult children and her youngest who is fifteen, in Chiswell Green, 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. The childminder is close to schools, shops and other local amenities. The family have a cat.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time and is currently minding six children, five of whom attend on a part-time basis. Four children are under five years.

The childminder has completed the Hertfordshire Quality Standards (HQS) accreditation scheme.

The childminder has also completed accreditation to become a member of the recently approved St Albans Childminding Network. This will enable her to accommodate children who are in receipt of funded nursery education. The childminder is also a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and is a childminding 'buddy' for new childminders.

The childminder has completed a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Early Childhood Studies and the Certificate in Childminding Practice (CCP).

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 rarely travel in the car, they walk to and from school and regularly visit local parks. Children have regular opportunities to use the garden and during the summer, benefit from swimming trips at the local school pool.

Children are cared for in a warm and comfortable home where their health needs are met. Their environment is clean and well maintained with children involved too, for example, they help to unload the dishwasher. Nappies are disposed of appropriately and there are effective measures to ensure good standards of kitchen and food hygiene. Children are beginning to understand simple good health and hygiene practices. They are encouraged to wash their hands as part of their regular routine and wipes are readily available to clean hands and faces. Children's independence is fostered as they take their own tissues, use the toilet freely and manage their own shoes and coats. Children are encouraged to help each other with these tasks too. Children that need to rest or sleep are able to do so in the front room, whilst other children use the dining room to play.

Children do not attend the childminders home if they have an infectious illness. Medication is administered if required and the relevant documentation is in place. A sickness policy is included in the childminder's portfolio and shared with parents.

Children benefit from a healthy, balanced diet. They enjoy home cooked food, including vegetables the children have helped to grow. Children have access to a wide range of fresh fruit, which they sometimes use to make their own fruit juice. Water is made available to children too, which they are all happy to drink. Children's individual dietary needs are discussed and agreed with parents and any likes and dislikes taken into consideration. Children enjoy a healthy variety of snacks, such as, raisins and cheese and when offered a snack, they are happy to sit and eat their banana. If parents provide food for their children, this is stored and prepared appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where any risks are identified and addressed. This enables them to move around safely, freely and with some independence. Children's safety is regularly monitored and reviewed through a risk assessment. Consequently, appropriate safety measures are in place, such as, fire precautions, safety gates and unsafe items are made inaccessible. Children learn about safety through the childminder, who sets a good example and frequently talks to them about safety issues, for example, when the oven has been used, she will make them aware of any potential dangers.

Children are kept safe whilst out and about. The childminder carries a mini first aid kit with her and a card, detailing emergency contact information, should it be required. Children are beginning to learn how to keep themselves safe and develop an awareness of road safety. They are told about different car lights and made aware of cars reversing. Children are encouraged to walk from an early age and know to hold onto the buggy whilst out and about. Children are kept safe in the garden as the childminder has identified any potential dangers, such as, prickly plants. Children are aware that flowers are for everyone's enjoyment and are shown how to care for them. An old garage that is unsafe is due to be taken down.

Children have access to a range of safe and suitable equipment. Toys and resources are rotated over a week and a selection is easily accessible to them, enabling them to make independent choices. Both indoor and outdoor resources are kept clean and any broken toys noted; items to replace, replenish or update.

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 knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. The childminder also holds a current first aid certificate.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy and very settled. They are busy and absorbed in their chosen area of play for long periods, occasionally stopping to talk to the childminder. Children are able to make independent choices from a wide range of easily accessible toys and resources.

Children acquire new knowledge and skills. The childminder has an excellent understanding of how children learn and develop and this is effectively monitored. Although the childminder knows the children extremely well observations are carried out and recorded regularly. This enables children's progress and development to be developed further. The childminder is very familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum and stepping stones of progress, although she is keen to encourage children's development in a more incidental and natural way. However, information regarding the 'Birth to three matters' framework is displayed and used as a

prompt/guidance for the focus of the week. Topics, such as Autumn are organised and children benefit from related activities. Photographs of children participating in various activities are taken and collated. These will be used as a photographic planning and assessment system. Many resources and reference books are used by the childminder for additional knowledge and ideas.

Children experience a broad range of opportunities both indoors and out of the home. Children experience regular trips to various parks and benefit from swimming trips during the summer months. Photographs depict children making bird cake, creating a collage and exploring different vegetables. Children are consistently challenged and they are asked questions to develop their thinking. Opportunities to explore and investigate a treasure basket prompts children to make comments, such as, whilst holding a large shell "I can hear the sea". Children are developing early mathematical concepts, as the childminder tells them "I have less pieces, lets see who has got more" and the child confidently counts to 12. Children show interest in what they do and are fully supported when necessary. For example, when completing some sequencing cards, they are asked "what does a seed do next?" and then "what does the caterpillar go into?" the child excitedly replies "a cocoon!". Older children have their knowledge enhanced, a nursery child learning about flight is taken by the childminder on a trip, relating to this topic.

Children develop positive relationships with the childminder. They sit together and look at photographs, chatting comfortably and asking each other questions. Children sit on the childminders lap to read a story. They are able to guess words when the childminder tells them the first letter and when she leaves out words, they fill them in! Children laugh and joke with the childminder, when she mentions McDonalds, they sing 'Old McDonald' Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they are offered praise and encouragement. They feel a sense of belonging and security and tell the childminder "I love you!".

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. They feel a sense of belonging as the childminder is committed to meeting each child's needs. High regard for the children ensures they are all given opportunities to learn and develop and provided with the right tools to do so. For example, children's independence is encouraged by giving them the appropriate feeding equipment. Children's various ages and stages of development and different personalities are all fully supported and planned for accordingly. When younger children are sleeping, older children can access further resources and this time also enables other children to benefit from further one to one time. Children often attend the childminders home from a young age and settle well. However, this is also a gradual process and dependant on children's individual need.

Children develop good self-esteem and respect for others. They learn by example and are cared for by a skilled childminder who provides a positive role model and places emphasis on praise and encouragement.

Children are introduced to a wider society through a variety of interesting and

challenging experiences; they use chopsticks, dress up in a variety of traditional costumes and make use of a selection of puppets. Children's differences are acknowledged and celebrated and any derogatory comments or incidents are recorded and discussed with parents. Children's needs are recognised as the childminder has an excellent understanding and sound knowledge of child development and is pro active in addressing any concerns with parents. Children with special needs are fully included in the setting and the childminder works with parents to discuss strategies and seek support, if appropriate.

Children play well and understand responsible behaviour. They are encouraged to think about unacceptable behaviour and reflect on it. Children that persist may be withdrawn from a situation and asked to apologise. They are then invited back to join in the fun. Children learn from each other and understand the expectations that have been established. However, the childminder feels she does not have any issues with unacceptable behaviour and is able to pre-empt any tricky situations and respond to them accordingly. Children are encouraged to have good manners and children and adults do not dwell on any negative behaviour. Children are motivated by plenty of praise and their good behaviour is acknowledged, for example, they are thanked for saying sorry.

Children are cared for by a childminder who works with parents to meet individual needs and ensure they are fully included in the life of the setting. She values and develops a strong partnership with them and has cared for many of her families on a long term basis. Families benefit from valuable information that is shared on daily basis on all aspects of the children's care. This is done through a two way diary that provides an important link between home and childminder. Children are settled according to the needs of the family, the lead taken from parents. Expectations are discussed and both parties must be happy before any arrangement begins. Honesty and openness are encouraged on both sides to ensure an effective partnership. Parents receive comprehensive information from the childminder in the form of a parent pack and this enables them to be fully informed of the childminder's practice. This pack covers all aspects of the care including; behaviour, child protection, confidentiality, equal opportunities, special educational needs, health and safety, the curriculum and information on the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are relaxed and comfortable within their environment. They are confident to initiate their own play and make choices, yet still approach the childminder for support or reassurance. The childminder has a high regard for the well-being of all children and the adult:child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play.

Children are cared for by a childminder who has an extensive knowledge and understanding of child development. The childminder has attended many courses and workshops since the last inspection to ensure she is kept up to date and continues to develop her knowledge. These include 'baby signing', 'visual impairment in the early years', 'playful learning', 'advanced child protection' 'telling sensory

stories' and 'Birth to three matters' framework. The childminder has also identified further training she would like to complete.

Policies and procedures are used effectively and support the good practice that is in place. Contracts are reviewed on an annual basis and regular communication ensures everyone is kept up to date. A record of complaints (none recorded) and compliments is also maintained. Cards and letters seen from past families are very positive and comment on the 'love, care and support' received from the childminder.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the childminder was asked to ensure appropriate checks are in place and this has been addressed.

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):

- ensure any outbuildings are made safe or inaccessible to children.

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