



Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | EY308748 |
| Inspection date | 22 February 2006 |
| Inspector | Gillian Charlesworth |

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| 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 June 2005 and is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA). She lives with her husband and 2 children under 3 years of age in the small village of Colney Heath near St Albans, Hertfordshire. The property is within walking distance of the local school, pre-school and park. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding, comprising a toilet, lounge and a dining room which leads through to the kitchen and utility room. The very large secure garden is equipped with small and large apparatus and is easily accessible from the play areas. The childminder has a car to transport children to and from the local pre-school and on outings.

The childminder is registered to care for 4 children under 8 years of age with no more than 1 child under 5 years. She is currently minding 1 child aged 3 years who attends on a part-time basis.

The childminder has no pets.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean home where they learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care because they are reminded and supported well in appropriate hand washing routines and toilet training. Their health is protected through the childminder's comprehensive written sickness policy that is shared with parents, together with detailed bespoke health documentation that is clearly understood. She has up to date knowledge of first aid to respond appropriately to children's accidents and emergencies.

A healthy lifestyle and active exercise is not sufficiently promoted because children have very few opportunities to walk in the fresh air or take part in physical activity on a large scale. Arrangements for children's naps are adequate.

Children are often involved in helping to prepare their own meals such as buttering bread or making vegetable soup. The childminder uses a healthy eating poster to help children learn the importance of a balanced diet as they count and identify fruits and vegetables and talk about the pictures together. The children are actively encouraged to sample and enjoy unfamiliar foods. An example menu provides parents with an overview of a varied healthy diet that offers children a range of textures and flavours such as curry and sweet and sour chicken. Children enjoy their meals and are consulted on options such as choices for sandwich fillings and various whole fruits. After lunch, children's requests for a chocolate biscuit are sensitively managed because they are encouraged to select and enjoy a healthy fruit option before their biscuit.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are at ease in the welcoming, secure and safe indoor environment. They follow their interests and use areas creatively as they move resources between rooms. There is plenty of equipment to meet children's needs such as booster seats for lunch-times, small furniture inside and outside and aids to help children's independence with personal hygiene. Toys are rotated from a range around the home and this ensures that children are interested and involved in the choices available. They know where to get additional books in the cupboard and can ask for puzzles.

The extensive outdoor environment is well equipped and is being developed to

provide children with opportunities to encourage their physical development. The childminder is fully aware of her responsibilities to ensure the children's safety outside. She has minimised many hazards such as the greenhouse and secure boundaries. The few remaining hazards that continue to pose a risk to children's safety, such as hardcore; a wood-pile and poisonous plants, have been identified as areas to address in order that the garden can be included in the registration.

Children are protected from harm because the childminder has taken full account of hazards and implemented preventative measures such as fitting a fireguard, safety gates, cupboard locks and electrical safety socket covers. Through the childminder's supervision and explanations, children can learn how to keep themselves safe and avoid accidental injury. For example, as their feet become too close to the car door threshold, the childminder intervenes and explains avoidance strategies. Fire safety arrangements are thoughtfully managed to protect children but are not yet established to include children in the development of evacuations.

The childminder understands her role in child protection and has secure procedures in place to protect and safeguard children's welfare. For example: she has all the required current guidance to hand; has the underpinning knowledge to identify signs that may cause concern to children's welfare; has secure recording procedures and is fully aware of reporting procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and content. They have good relationships with other young children and with the childminder who supports them well. Children are self-assured because the childminder joins in with their play and encourages their development and imagination. As a result, children feel confident to communicate and develop their ideas through play. For example, they identify that "owls live in a tall house" and they suggest that they can build trees over the train-track instead of bridges.

They show interest in the activities available as they explore and investigate the resources. For example, they dip into balloons left over from a party, look at books and begin to play imaginatively, representing one object for another. They enjoy using interactive toys and often revisit these to consolidate their learning. Children confidently use questions to affirm their understanding if they are unsure and are supported well by the childminder. For example, children investigate a wooden truck and ask "is this a roof?" The childminder gently acknowledges this and goes on to explain how the roof can be taken on and off, thus providing children with new knowledge and skills.

There is a strong emphasis on helping young children to learn right from wrong through the effective strategies to help them share play materials fairly. As children respond well and learn to co-operate, they develop essential social skills and positive relationships with each other.

Children are gently challenged to solve problems through every day activities as they are asked how many plates they will need for lunch and eagerly reply. They are

encouraged to talk about shapes in meaningful situations such as when they cut sandwiches into triangles and this extends their learning and vocabulary.

The childminder has begun to have regard to guidance materials for children from birth to three to enable her to enhance experiences for young children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and are supported well through the childminder's attentiveness and constant interaction. They feel a sense of belonging as they use all accessible areas confidently. They are fully included in the life of the setting because they make decisions about activities and meals, their likes and dislikes are understood and respected and they are treated with equal concern. Children benefit from the arrangements to promote continuity of care and their individual routines are well managed through a combination of strategies. For example, regular discussions take place with the children and parents, parents are provided with a daily diary of information and some written policies and information is sought on the children at the outset. Children's awareness of diversity is sometimes encouraged through craft activities focussing on key celebrations such as Chinese New Year. Children do not always experience diversity through play because appropriate materials are not prominently available. The childminder is aware that some children may have special needs and has devised a brief written policy statement to inform parents of her practice. She is willing to discuss any specific needs with parents as they arise and take steps to promote children's welfare and development within her capabilities.

Children behave well because they have plenty of adult praise, support and reassurance. They are encouraged to play harmoniously together and learn responsible behaviour because they are well supported by effective strategies that they understand. They are often confident to take responsibility and seek help from the childminder if they cannot resolve minor issues for themselves. For example they ask for help on how to use the timer to manage turn taking fairly. Children are helped to understand about reasons for doing things in a certain way because the childminder provides them with suitable explanations. For example, children are asked not to play in areas where others are sleeping and a safety gate is erected to minimise issues.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are protected because all adults associated with the setting are suitably vetted. Their welfare, care and learning are effectively promoted because the childminder has a sound knowledge of childcare practices. For example, she has a Nursery Nurse Examining Board Level 3 Certificate, has completed an Introduction to Childminding course and is committed to keep abreast of new guidance such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework. She has universal checklists to review some areas of her practice. However, these do not sufficiently link to monitoring her own practice

and identifying areas where children's care, learning and welfare can be improved based on the National Standards. For example, improving play materials to help children appreciate diversity and devising a full range of policies including complaints and child protection.

Children's day-to-day welfare is highly regarded as the childminder organises indoor space so that they can rest and play according to their needs and preferences. She has taken positive steps to provide a suitable outdoor area to enhance children's experiences. The children can follow their interests and be enthusiastic learners because the childminder organises her time to share in their experiences.

The childminder is committed to providing efficient detailed information to support the safe management of children. Parents are kept well informed, verbally and in writing, on a daily basis. All significant information is recorded and some written policies and photographic records are being developed to further support continuity of care for the children. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints 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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| The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding. |
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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 children frequently take part in regular exercise and healthy outdoor experiences
- ensure that hazards in the garden are safe or inaccessible to children

- implement methods to self-assess and develop practice linked to the National Standards and any associated guidance.

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