

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	23/10/2009
Inspector	Hilary Preece
Type of setting	Childminder

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the childminding

The childminder was registered in 1993. She lives with her husband, children aged 10 and 13 years and two adult children in the Marshalswick area of St Albans. The premises are located close to schools, shops and parks. Children use the ground floor only of the home and have access to an enclosed garden for outdoor play.

The childminder is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of six children under eight years at any one time, no more than three of which may be in the early years age range. She is currently minding 10 children in this age group at different times of the week. The childminder has three assistants registered to work with her and during these times she may care for six children in the early years age range. She offers care to children aged over five to 11 years and is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The childminder is qualified to NVQ Level 3 and has recently been awarded the Early Years Professional Status. She has completed the Herts Quality Standards quality assurance scheme and is currently updating this. She runs a regular drop-in group for other childminders.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The childminder meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) exceptionally well. The outcomes for all children are high and they make rapid progress in their learning and development because the childminder understands them so well. She strives tirelessly to work in partnership with parents, carers and other providers of the EYFS to ensure there is continuity and consistency for children at all times. Rigorous self-evaluation and continuous professional development are major factors in the success of maintaining high quality provision and planning for further improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- reviewing and extending the systems for observing children in order to track progress towards the early learning goals.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues throughout the setting. The childminder and her assistants update their knowledge of child

protection issues and procedures through attending training together so that all fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Robust vetting procedures are followed to ensure all are suitable to work with children. They all attend regular staff meetings where they are involved in setting and reviewing policies, which are robust and well-implemented. High quality risk assessments and attention to helping children become aware of safety issues contribute to an environment that is safe and secure but also allows children to take risks without being fearful.

The childminder is a confident early years professional. She is extremely knowledgeable, experienced and embraces her work with enthusiasm. A highly motivated approach to moving forward means she successfully manages to maintain the high quality provision and continuous improvement. As well as using the Ofsted self-evaluation form to identify and plan priorities for improvement, she takes part in a quality assurance scheme and uses her Early Years Professional status programme to reflect on her practice. This enables her to accurately assess her strengths and areas for development and seek solutions to overcoming any barriers to improvement. Good practice and ideas are shared amongst other childminders and the views of parents and children are acted upon.

The childminder recognises the value of partnership working and strives to develop effective and professional links with other providers of the EYFS. She has, for example, taken a lead role in setting up meetings with pre-school and school staff to discuss particular issues of concern and develop ways of sharing information to support individual children. As a result, children's safety within the vicinity of the local school has markedly improved and systems to support children's continuity in learning and transitions to other settings are much more effective. Children settle remarkably easily because strong levels of engagement with parents and carers exist from the start. Equality and diversity is promoted extremely well. Systems for integrating all children, and particularly those with English as an additional language, are highly effective in developing children's confidence, sense of belonging and narrowing any gaps in children's achievement. Highly positive relationships stem from the childminder's friendly but professional approach. Information is exchanged using a range of methods to suit different needs, including formal newsletters, emails and diaries to less formal daily discussion and text messaging. A comment in the parent questionnaire describes how the childminder makes a huge contribution to children's learning, development, safety and fun.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well through some robust policies and health and hygiene practices. They gain an excellent understanding of how to eat healthily by contributing to routines such as preparing their meals and snacks. In this way they learn to make healthy choices and understand the benefits of particular foods on their health and the origin of foods. A rich discussion around how raisins are actually shrivelled, dried grapes prompts a child to ask where oranges come from, thus stimulating further thinking, language and understanding. Children relish being physically active in the garden and confidently

use apparatus such as the trampoline, climbing frame and swing to develop coordination, balance and control. Young children show particular confidence and determination to climb. The childminder encourages their natural curiosity to take risks through gently and safely guiding them whilst allowing them to work things out for themselves. There is immense delight and sense of achievement once this is accomplished, which adds to children's already high levels of confidence and independence. Children's understanding of safety issues is first class because safe practices, and the reason for them, is instilled in children from a very young age. They are fully aware of why and when they need to wash their hands, for example, and understand the need to listen and respond to instructions when the emergency evacuation drill is practised.

Children are exceptionally well-motivated and clearly enjoy their time with the childminder. Relationships at all levels are excellent and contribute to high self-esteem and confidence. Older children show great consideration for their younger peers and there is a general sense of cooperation and inclusion. All children, for example, can help with routines such as feeding the pets and tidying up. Respecting children's differences and becoming aware of diversity is meaningfully promoted through visits to the local Asian food shops and ensuring that activities reflect the cultural experiences of those attending. Children make full use of the stimulating and well planned environment. Toys and resources are easily accessible to all children and free-flow play between the home and garden allows the needs of children who prefer to play in different ways to be met. The garden is particularly well-planned to encourage active learning. It is divided into delightful play zones and provides varied and challenging experiences. Children can relax with a book or explore nature in the quiet zone tucked away at the end of the garden, play imaginatively in the sand pit which sits draped under tented netting or use the well equipped play house. Children develop exceptionally good skills in communicating, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology that equip them very well as they move on to nursery and school. These skills are often developed effectively through role play situations that reflect real experiences such as the optician, the office, the doctor's surgery and the builder's yard. Digital cameras play an important part in the setting. Children use this form of media to find out how things work as they follow the process through from taking the photograph to transferring it to the computer to printing the finished image. Displays of photographs are used by children as a starting point for conversation with even the very youngest children pointing and attempting to vocalise the names of their peers.

Children are supported exceptionally well as they explore their surroundings and make choices and decisions. The childminder places great value on children being in control of their own play and leading with their ideas and interests. She skilfully observes them so she can build on what they enjoy doing. For example, a fascination with playing under the table led to a discussion with children about making camps and how next time they come she could provide resources such as blankets, tunnels and the play parachute for them to go underneath. Observations, photographs and samples of children's work are displayed in individual learning journey records and used to identify the next steps in children's learning. Systems for managing these more efficiently are under review and in most cases records

show evidence of the excellent progress that children make towards the early learning goals.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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