

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	123498
Inspection date	17/12/2009
Inspector	Gillian Charlesworth

Type of setting	Childminder
------------------------	-------------

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the childminding

The childminder was registered in October 2000. She lives with her partner and teenage child in the Marshalswick area of St Albans, Hertfordshire, close to shops, parks and schools. There is a steep slope to access the house and a step between different levels of the garden where children can play outside. Childminding generally takes place on the ground floor with space for sleep and a bathroom on the first floor. The family have pet fish.

The childminder is registered on the Early Years and both the voluntary and compulsory part of the Childcare Register. She is registered to care for a maximum of six children under eight years at any one time, of whom, no more than three may be in the early years age range. She is currently minding seven children in this age group who have various part-time attendance patterns. She cares for a further three children aged from six to 13 years before and after school and during the school holidays.

The childminder supports a minority of children who speak English as an additional language. She uses a car to transport children and takes them on local outings regularly. She walks children to and from local schools each day. She is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and has a Level 3 early years qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children relish their time in the setting and their individual needs are met well. They are respected as individuals in the supportive and stimulating environment that provides them with opportunities to make good progress in their learning and development overall. Relationships with parents are positive and mostly promote effective continuity of care, learning and development, although strategies with partner settings are less well-developed. There is a wide range of records policies and procedures that successfully promote children's welfare, although the sound safeguarding strategies are limited by an oversight in meeting requirements. The childminder is conscientious, shows a strong professional commitment towards her role, and is eager to maintain continuous improvement as she begins to develop self-evaluation strategies.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop further a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development
- develop further working in partnership with other settings and parents, involving them in children's continuous learning and development, ensuring

they have regular opportunities to add to records, and improving the quality of written policies available

- develop further children's own ideas for effective creative development and learning rather than reproducing someone else's pictures and images.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Records, policies and procedures promote the safe and efficient management of children overall. The childminder updates her child protection training regularly and therefore has a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures. She has taken steps to ensure the suitability of those living in the premises by notifying Ofsted of changes, therefore all adults in the household are suitably vetted. However, on occasions, the childminder is allowing children to use the newly refurbished and child-centred outside area which her conditions of registration do not permit. This is an offence unless the provider gives a reasonable excuse. Ofsted does not intend to prosecute on this occasion. There is no immediate risk to children because there is a strong commitment to managing risks including comprehensive daily and annual checks, and the garden area has been significantly improved to enhance children's experiences outdoors. Security is given high priority and a chime alarm has been fitted as an extra safety precaution that alerts the childminder when the porch door is opened. Resources are used effectively and promote inclusion well, for example, taking account of children's individual needs by providing left-handed scissors or using bilingual books. A purpose-built, well-equipped playroom is particularly child-centred and empowers children to make choices and move around freely.

The childminder works hard to improve practice. She has suitably tackled previous recommendations since the last inspection. She has improved the range of activities and interactions with children by developing her knowledge through a wide range of training including completion of an early years Level 3 qualification. She has begun to introduce self-evaluation procedures that accurately identify some strengths and take account of parent's views through questionnaires. However, practice is not yet rigorously evaluated to identify oversights and target areas for improvement.

The childminder engages very well with parents, many of whom are long-term. She shares an extensive range of valuable information within a portfolio, although policy statements are brief, thus limiting the quality of some information. Parents' views are actively sought and recent feedback confirms the strong sense of trust. Parents express full satisfaction with the care, activities, relationships, and the progress their children are making. Working parents value the flexibility. Observation and assessment records are shared periodically, complimenting the visual displays and verbal feedback. Systems are not yet fully developed to encourage parents and other providers delivering the EYFS to contribute to the records and ensure continuity.

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

The quality of children's learning is good and children are making good progress and enjoy their learning and development. Systems have recently been introduced to observe and assess children's learning and development using a range of information, which informs children's progress and their next steps towards the early learning goals. The childminder uses this information to plan activities based on children's interests. Consequently, children are engaged in a wide range of activities that interest them and support them to think critically and be active learners. However, some aspects of their creative development are less well-developed. For example, craft activities are often adult-directed and focus on using predetermined pictures and images that limit children's own ideas.

Children take responsibility and play an active part in the setting and wider community. They are keen to participate and are happily engaged, for example, when using play dough. They develop physical skills using a range of tools, encouraged by the childminder to roll and cut duckling shapes from the dough and sort them into family groups and sizes while having fun. Children have good behaviour, identify appropriate turn taking and are well-mannered, naturally using conventions such as 'thank you' in response to the childminder's respectful approach. They respond well to the childminder's sensitive distraction that encourages and motivates them to be involved in purposeful, enjoyable activities. For example, as they reach for the television remote control the childminder suggests construction blocks, which they eagerly find together in the low-level storage units. They begin joining pieces and playing imaginatively with the men in the tractors and the ladies in the plane, building on past experiences gained from familiar female visitors who talk to them about trips in aeroplanes.

Children apply skills well in communicating, literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) during their play, assisted well by the childminder's skilful interactions. For example, they are introduced to visitors and therefore feel confident to communicate and share prior activities such as handprints. They have warm incidental conversations while playing, for example, talking about future changes to their routines, that prepare them well for the transition between childminder and pre-school. Older children use the computer to research activities and younger children use interactive phones to make playful conversation with imaginary people. They imitate interactive voices and the childminder's prompts, as they develop independent imaginative play in an exciting enclosed play space that the childminder helps them to create.

Children feel safe in the setting and show their understanding of issues relating to safety as they purposefully move between safety gates, pushing them closed. Parents identify the setting feels safe, secure and loving. The childminder helps children understand dangers, for example, by explaining the risks when they climb on the base of a cupboard, eager to be involved as they are encouraged to choose the colour of their cups and what they would like to drink. They learn hygiene routines when encouraged to thoroughly wash their hands before lunch. They are consulted over meal options during the course of the morning, which empowers

them to make healthy choices. Young children enjoy healthy snacks as they tuck into a whole apple, pointing to the apple tree in the garden and making connections where apples come from. Children are encouraged to take daily physical exercise through visits and walks in all weathers to the local shops, schools and parks. They have chances to practice their balancing, climbing and swinging skills on outings thus extending their coordination and physical development.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

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

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