



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123398
Inspection date	25 May 2005
Inspector	Gillian Charlesworth

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 has been registered since 1996 and is a member of the National Childminding Association (N.C.M.A). She lives in a house with her husband and two teenage children in a quiet residential street in the Southdown district of Harpenden. Children play on the ground floor where there are bathroom facilities. A first floor bedroom can be used for undisturbed rest. A secure rear garden on two levels, is accessible from the kitchen and is used as a whole group activity since there is no visual means of supervision from indoors.

At the time of the inspection there were 12 part-time children on the roll, six of whom

are under 5 years of age and six who are over 5. There was one child under four years present during the visit.

The Childminder provides regular opportunities for minded children to attend a local Parent and Toddler group and the local library. She offers a service for families attending The Grove Primary School and Southdown Methodist Church Pre-School which are within walking distance although she has the use of a car for childminding purposes.

The family have a pet cats.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have the opportunity to develop their physical skills regularly both indoors and outdoors. They creatively and spontaneously make good use of the indoor environment by using their large muscles to lift household furniture such as dining room chairs to accommodate their imaginative play or bring the play tunnel into a space to explore and develop their special awareness. Preschool children experience changes to their body as they become breathless while demonstrating their ballet skills in costume, delighting in running, hopping and jumping gracefully across the room. The childminder helps them to develop an awareness of their own needs by checking their body temperature regularly and talking about the importance of keeping warm. In the garden, they play with the equipment such as the slide, mobile toys, ping-pong or badminton. They walk to the local school regularly to get plenty of fresh air and often use the local park for exercise.

Children are cared for in a comfortable home where they are encouraged to learn the importance of good personal care, health and hygiene. Children begin to develop an awareness of their own needs and those of others through the childminder's constant attention. For example, she talks about their dolly's nappy changing and feeding needs during imaginative play. Children are beginning to develop independent routines through the childminder's sensitive intervention as she gently reminds them to visit the toilet or wash their hands before a meal. Shared towels are changed daily and children are well supervised at arms length for example, during hand-washing routines they confidently call for the childminder for help to 'run water'.

Most families provide food from home and a small minority have a cooked meal provided by the childminder. These arrangements take account of children's preferences, and meals that are provided are nutritious, home-cooked and often frozen and re-heated. Children eat at the table socially and are offered healthy fruit snacks or vegetable bites each day as part of the routine. They help themselves to beakers of drink which are freely available within the play area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well supervised and are cared for in a homely, child-centred environment where risks have been identified and minimised. This means that children can move around safely and freely within the environment, protected by informal procedures and safety equipment such as a stair-gate and a high bolt fitted to the exit which is used as necessary and keeps children secure in their environment. The childminder identifies and talks to the children about using equipment safely, for example, by climbing down from the stool before washing their hands, to avoid falling. On outings, children are aware of and follow simple rules to keep themselves safe. The childminder routinely talks to them about people who help to keep them safe when crossing the road, for example, the 'lollypop lady'. As a result, children respond to and clearly understand the rules. For example, they can confidently explain how they hold the buggy when crossing the road. Written evacuation procedures are practiced three monthly or sooner if a new child attends. This helps children to respond appropriately in an emergency situation.

Children enjoy choosing from the variety of resources and activities which are available and are developmentally appropriate. They are free to use all household furniture to develop their play imaginatively or socially and have some opportunities to use child-size furniture at the childminder's discretion. To protect children from harm, there are informal procedures which work in practice to keep toys clean and safe. For example, the childminder uses wet-wipes to clean a dolly's highchair before use.

The childminder has the majority of the required procedures and documents in place to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. For example, she holds a current first-aid certificate and has the appropriate publications readily available to support her work. She attended training in 2004 to underpin her knowledge of child protection procedures ,although has not yet implemented all procedures for incidents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled and are often involved in a wide range of activities. They benefit from excellent relationships with the childminder who is particularly attentive, responsive and supportive. Children's questions and curiosity are acknowledged and affirmed. If they ask 'What's for lunch?' the childminder responds by encouraging the child to look in her lunch-box and identify the food. This enables children to develop their confidence and self-esteem by following their interests in a secure environment where they flourish. They enjoy choosing and handling books carefully and cuddle-up on the sofa to read with the childminder. They interact well together and are absorbed in sharing stories, counting and naming pictures, including those which are unfamiliar such as birds or exotic fruits, all of which supports their developing knowledge, enthusiasm and concentration.

Children confidently describe their particular interest as 'playing' which is free-flowing and often expressed imaginatively through role play or creative activities with art materials. For example, children are immersed in developing their own play ideas;

they solve problems and seek out additional resources such as spoons from the kitchen drawer and a dining chair to enable them to feed their baby at eye level. Sometimes, children's preferences for play, limit the range of activities they take part in and the childminder does not monitor this routinely. However, the childminder willingly acts on advice and has supported children to try a larger variety of activities.

Babies needs are sensitively managed through the childminder's commitment to provide continuity of care and effective consultation with parents. Babies who find it difficult to settle are constantly acknowledged and affirmed whilst involving other children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the childminder's attentiveness and commitment to treat everyone as individuals. She consults them and offers choices at every opportunity, for example, when they are choosing dressing up clothes. This enables children to be enthusiastic and confidently make decisions through their chosen activities. Although development of activities to increase children's awareness of diversity have not been sufficiently prioritised, children actively use books that are chosen from the library and rotated to increase their awareness of the wider world. For example, they select books and talk about exotic fruits which they may not usually encounter.

Children benefit from the childminders open, positive relationships with parents. She shares written information and procedures to enable continuity of methods and finds out and acts upon verbal information from home such as favourite foods and settling-in whilst giving children plenty of attention to help them to feel secure and happy.

Children respond positively to the childminder's approach to managing behaviour which is responsive towards their needs, includes plenty of praise and clear boundaries. They understand the benefits of mutual respect and are routinely encouraged to use conventions such as please and thank you. Occasional unwanted behaviour is discussed with parents and the childminder acts on their suggestions to support the children, for example, by introducing strategies such as star charts with positive effect. There is no formal monitoring through an incident log, therefore children's behaviour cannot be accurately reflected upon.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children feel at home and at ease in their environment which means they are confident to initiate and extend their own play and learning with plenty of adult support. They show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy for example holding hands on outings. Policies and procedures are summarised in a folder or displayed on a notice board for parents, to keep them well informed about the service. Most documentation supports the safe management of

the provision, and is comprehensive and up to date. Records are always shared with parents although some are not yet organised to reflect confidentially, for example, medication records. Exchange of information is organised informally on a daily basis and this contributes to continuity in the children's care. For example behaviour strategies are discussed and agreed and, progress with regard to settling-in is reviewed regularly. Some areas in need of review and development have been overlooked since the childminder does not have a system to monitor and review her practice regularly. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the childminder has reinforced her knowledge of child protection by attending a local course and has the relevant guidance materials to hand. She has developed accurate attendance, medication and accident records although not all are confidential. To improve fire safety, the childminder has consulted a Fire Officer and developed appropriate evacuation procedures which are shared with parents and routinely practiced. An additional smoke alarm has been fitted to the first floor and is checked occasionally. Advice has been sought on the positioning of the fire blanket to ensure it is easy to operate in the event of an emergency and this remains freestanding. The childminder uses books from the library to promote children's awareness of the wider world, has extended her dressing-up to include a Shari and her art materials to include skin-tone crayons. However, the range of activities and resources to promote diversity and anti-discriminatory practice remains very limited and children are not inspired to expand their horizons through play.

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):

- Develop a system to continually review and monitor practice to identify and address areas for improvement.

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