



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY234176
Inspection date	23 August 2006
Inspector	Sandra Daniels
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 2002. She lives with her husband and four children aged six, 12, 14 and 15 years in Sawbridgeworth. Local shops, parks and a library are within walking distance and schools and pre-schools are nearby.

The whole of the premises is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play. The family has a pet cat.

The childminder is registered to care for five children under eight years. The childminder works with two other registered childminders on the premises and together they may care for a maximum of ten children under eight years. Currently they are caring for eight children under eight, mostly on a part-time basis. The childminder has overall responsibility for the childminding practice. Her co-minders work in a supportive role.

The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is given particularly high regard by this childminder. She has many years experience as a paediatric nurse and uses her expert knowledge to great effect. Children benefit as the childminder becomes actively involved in supporting parents to ensure their children's health needs are recognised and met. Children are consistently well protected from infection and their good health is promoted as the childminder has a comprehensive policy and procedure in place for sick children. They are comforted and kept safe until they are collected by a parent.

Children are welcomed into this very clean and well maintained premises where very high standards of hygiene are maintained. From a young age children learn the importance of washing their hands before meals and after using the toilet. The childminder explains to them that hand washing helps to keep us healthy and she actively encourages their independence in this area. The childminder is an excellent role model to children, helping them to develop a very good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy.

Children have an excellent understanding of healthy eating because the childminder talks to them about what they eat and what is good for them. They join together for real and imaginary picnics and use these opportunities to discover new foods and tastes. Older children know that they should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, as this is promoted by the childminder. Children are extremely well nourished. The childminder cooks meals for them using fresh produce which the children help to choose at the shops. Individual dietary requirements are acknowledged and fully respected. The childminder is exceptionally knowledgeable about allergies and works closely with parents to ensure all children only have what they are permitted to eat. Children enjoy experiencing new tastes, and are encouraged to take an interest in healthy foods through being able to make choices and participating in the preparation and cooking of meals and snacks. Meal times are seen as social times and an opportunity for the childminder to help children enjoy their food and become independent in feeding themselves.

Young children's emotional stability and resilience is nurtured as the childminder applies the principles of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to her practice. She works closely in partnership with parents to ensure that babies' emotions are responded to in a manner that meets their individual needs. A settling-in period supports children to be able to relax and feel comfortable in the new surroundings. This actively promotes healthy separation between children and their parents.

Children benefit greatly from open access to a large, exceptionally well equipped garden where they can develop and practise physical skills. Their confidence grows as they negotiate obstacle courses, throw and catch balls and pedal bikes and tricycles. Children thrive as they enjoy fresh air daily whilst walking to and from school and pre-school. They are taken on trips to parks and participate in fitness activities such as swimming, bowling and ice skating.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are encouraged to explore and experiment in a very safe environment. The childminder's home is extremely warm, welcoming and child-centred, allowing children to feel safe and secure. All potential hazards have been identified and minimised. Children are further protected through the effective implementation of a comprehensive risk assessment to the premises, both inside and out. Outings are also risk assessed and planned according to the numbers and ages of children involved. For example, a trip to the beach is not particularly suitable for babies as they may try to eat the sand.

When on outings children's safety is ensured by meticulous planning. Emergency supplies, such as a first aid kit, tissues and spare clothes are taken and the childminder ensures that parents are fully informed about where their children are going. Written parental permission is given for all children to be taken on outings, both in the childminder's own vehicle and on public transport. When walking to and from school, children are kept safe as they learn about safe places to cross the road. They look for pedestrian crossings and wait for the green man. From a young age children know they must hold hands or hold onto the buggy.

Children have fun whilst learning to keep themselves safe and avoid accidents. Older children are supported and encouraged to think of what action they might need to take in an emergency. As the childminder works with two co-minders, there is always a suitable person known to the children who can take over their care in an emergency situation. Children develop a healthy awareness of the potential dangers of fire. They regularly practise an evacuation procedure and understand the need to behave responsibly. Older children understand that some of the toys and equipment they enjoy is not suitable for babies or younger children. They are encouraged to be vigilant, as is the childminder herself, and ensure that such items are kept out of the reach of younger children. Resources are checked regularly by the childminder to ensure that there are no broken parts that could harm a child. They are all of very good quality and very well maintained. Children develop independence skills as they are able to self-select toys and games from the storage units in the playroom. Space within the home is extremely well organised allowing children to move around safely and independently. Babies and children have choices in an environment where there is a very good balance between freedom and safe limits.

Children's welfare is highly promoted through the childminder's expert knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. There is a clear policy and procedure in place which is shared with parents. The childminder is confident of her role and responsibilities in the protection of children and clearly knows what to do should she have any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The childminder is highly skilled at planning a broad range of stimulating and challenging activities based on children's interests and their stages of development. Children respond very well to the childminder's enthusiasm and motivation. They are happy and confident in this setting where they also have many opportunities to initiate and develop their own play. They

are supported by the childminder as they take an umbrella out into the rain in the garden. They laugh as they watch rain drops fall onto cones. The childminder instinctively knows when to support them in their play and when to stand back.

Good consideration is given to providing children with opportunities for imaginative play experiences. For example, children enjoy creating imaginary tea parties and picnics for their dolls. They enjoy the varied programme of planned outings with the childminder. Trips to museums, farms and the airport inspire discussions and future ideas for play.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they choose from the activities and experiences available to them. The childminder is knowledgeable about how children learn best, so there is always time for spontaneous activities led by children's individual interests. Children feel good about themselves as the childminder offers praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements. Children are encouraged to talk and express themselves imaginatively as the childminder makes time to listen to them and respond appropriately.

Children clearly have a sense of belonging in this family setting. The childminder fosters close and comfortable relationships with each child and encourages them to build relationships with each other. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is used effectively to promote young children's development in all areas. Babies benefit from activities that are organised and resources that are selected to allow them to build on their natural curiosity as learners. They have opportunities to develop their language as the childminder shares with them the fun of introducing new vocabulary.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children display extremely high levels of independence and self-esteem as they joyfully interact with the childminder and her family. They are relaxed and comfortable as they develop the necessary skills to manage their own needs very well. Children learn to work and play harmoniously with others because the childminder encourages sharing and co-operation between them. They begin to consider the feelings of others as they are supported by the childminder to talk things through and resolve their own conflicts.

The childminder actively encourages good behaviour by regularly praising children and explaining clearly why some things are not acceptable. She negotiates and teaches children the consequences of their actions. Children respond very well to these methods and demonstrate high levels of behaviour and self-discipline.

The childminder has an excellent awareness and understanding of equal opportunities and actively promotes a fully inclusive environment where every child matters. Children's individual needs are met exceptionally well by this childminder who has experience of caring for children with additional needs. She is pro-active in ensuring that all children are fully enabled to participate. For example, the childminder spends time with children who are learning to speak English as an additional language. Children develop a healthy respect for others and a high awareness of similarities and differences in people and the way they live. The childminder

promotes this by providing books and toys that reflect the range of people around them in a positive manner.

Children feel highly valued because the childminder gives considerable attention to meeting their individual needs. She has an excellent understanding of the issues surrounding the care of children with special needs and how this affects both parents and children.

The childminder works very closely and co-operatively with parents, sharing information both verbally and in writing through children's 'home diaries'. She also gives parents detailed information about forthcoming outings and events. Trusting and highly supportive relationships have been fostered with parents. Comprehensive written policies and procedures are shared and can easily be seen in practice. For example, the childminder displays the 'Birth to three matters' framework poster so that parents can see how this influences the care that she offers. This strengthens children's well-being, development and progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall the needs of children are met. Children's care is enhanced by creative and effective organisation. All policies and procedures are well written and presented under appropriate headings. They are clearly effective in practice. Many additional information leaflets are available, both to support the practice and for parents to use. For example, information on children's health matters such as meningitis and cot death is available. Children are effectively protected, their well-being is promoted and their development is well supported.

Children benefit from routines that are planned and yet flexible, so that they can feel secure and confident and begin to understand what comes next in their day. The childminder works together with two co-minders. They carefully plan a consistent approach and have monthly meetings to discuss current issues and training needs. Two of the childminders have basic food hygiene training and two have attended a course relating to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. All three co-minders are booked onto a child protection course in the near future. There is a clear commitment to developing their practice. They are an enthusiastic and motivated team.

All records are kept up-to-date and are regularly reviewed to ensure the correct information is retained. All necessary documentation is in place and is used effectively to provide for children's care and safety. However, the emergency evacuation procedures practised with children are not fully documented. The childminder ensures that all persons with access to children are suitably vetted.

The childminder has a very good understanding of the needs of young children. Their welfare is promoted by the childminder's extensive knowledge and experience of working with children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the childminder agreed to request written permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment. Children's health and safety is promoted as all parents have given their permission for this in writing.

The childminder also agreed to ensure that all evidence is available at inspection. All necessary documentation is in place and is easily and readily accessible for inspection purposes.

Complaints since the last inspection

Between March 2005 and March 2006 Ofsted received five complaints which raised concerns about the supervision of children and the number of children being cared for. All complaints were investigated by childcare inspectors and no evidence was found to suggest any breaches in the National Standards. On each occasion Ofsted took no further action and the provider remains qualified for registration. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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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):

- give consideration to maintaining a written record of fire safety checks, including emergency evacuation practises.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk