

Inspection date	21/05/2014
Previous inspection date	17/12/2008

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	1
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The childminder has an expert knowledge of how children learn. She skilfully tunes in to their individual needs and preferences in order to fully challenge and extend their capacity for learning. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high.
- Children's desire to explore and investigate is nurtured extremely well. The environment and resources are wonderfully stimulating and interesting.
- The childminder is highly skilled at helping all children make secure emotional attachments. Her sensitive and gentle persistence helps children to settle as quickly as possible.
- Children show high levels of self-control, independence and motivation during activities. This prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage in their learning.
- The childminder goes above and beyond expectations to work with parents. She involves them in every aspect of her work and is a valuable source of information and support.
- The childminder has a robust knowledge of safeguarding issues and makes rigorous risk assessments of every aspect of her provision. Therefore, children are very safe and secure.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main play area and garden.
- The inspector looked at a selection of policies, procedures, planning, children's learning records and photographs of children joining in with different activities.
- The inspector spoke with the childminder and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector checked evidence of the childminder's training and qualifications and the suitability of household members aged over 16.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through reading correspondence and speaking to them during the inspection.

Inspector

Hilary Preece

Full report

Information about the setting

The childminder was registered in 1995 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. She lives with her husband and one adult daughter in St Albans, Hertfordshire. The whole of the ground floor of the house and rear garden is used for childminding. Additional space on the first floor is used for sleeping children. The childminder attends groups for children, uses the local children's centre and takes children on nature walks on a regular basis. She collects children from the local schools and pre-schools. There are currently five children on roll who are in the early years age group and attend for a variety of sessions. The childminder operates all year round from 7.15am to 6pm, Monday to Thursday, during school term time only. The childminder supports children with English as an additional language and has experience of working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. She is a member of the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years. She holds a Level 3 qualification in nursery nursing. The childminder has completed a quality assurance scheme in the past. She practises many approaches of the Steiner philosophy.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- continue to enhance the already strong partnerships with other early years settings to support continuity in children's learning, particularly looking at ways to overcome any barriers to communication.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children thrive in this inclusive, child-centred setting. The childminder has an exceptionally accurate knowledge of each child and skilfully tunes into their particular needs. She has considerable experience spanning many years and a deep understanding of how children learn. Consequently, children make excellent progress in all aspects of learning and development. The childminder makes very sensitive observations in order to plan for children's learning. These include both spontaneous observations and more focused observations that identify their achievements and next steps in learning. The childminder uses observations to plan meaningful experiences tailored precisely to children's learning needs. This supports their rapid progress and achievements. Parents make valuable contributions to their children's learning journey records. They readily share news about what their children learn and experience at home, so that the childminder builds a complete picture of the child. The childminder constantly offers ideas about how parents can support and continue learning at home. This gives children the best possible opportunity to excel. For example, she informs parents about the value of treasure baskets and heuristic play for babies and toddlers. This involves encouraging them to find

suitable 'junk' items at home to use for open-ended play and discovery. In addition, she invites parents to observe children using these type of materials so that they can see first-hand how they benefit development. The childminder works very effectively with most other early years settings that children attend. There is excellent communication with these practitioners and information is freely shared. This enables her to plan relevant and complementary experiences that support continuity in children's learning very well. However, there is scope to further strengthen arrangements for sharing information with all of the settings that children attend, particularly where these settings show reluctance to engage.

The childminder is a highly effective teacher. She provides children with plenty of space, time and open-ended materials to lead and develop their own play. For example, she skilfully engages their interest in exploring the seashore. This involves creating an imaginary beach scene using blue and yellow fabric sheets to represent sea and sand. Children choose to add wooden boats, miniature people, sea creatures and shells to the scene. Throughout, the childminder encourages children to actively think and communicate by asking well-chosen open questions. She models very clear vocabulary to help children name and describe features of different sea creatures. This leads children to count the points on a star fish and tentacles on a squid. The childminder repeats back children's utterances, discreetly correcting the tense in a way that helps them to correct themselves. Furthermore, the childminder is acutely aware of how children with English as an additional language learn to communicate. She discusses their development frequently with parents and uses key words in home languages to help children's understanding. Therefore, children are extremely well supported to become confident communicators. In addition, books are used very thoughtfully to develop children's interest and readiness for reading. The childminder has recently introduced a dialogic approach. This involves using adult prompts to talk about the pictures, ask questions, encourage conversation and discussion. This approach is reported to help young children build and reinforce the basic language and literacy skills that will make them successful readers. Consequently, children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning in school.

The childminder constantly searches for innovative ways to support individual children's development. To encourage a baby to take their first steps she places one interesting object on each of her dining chairs. This stimulates babies' natural desire to explore and investigate. It encourages them to pull themselves up to stand and move confidently between the chairs in order to explore the objects. The childminder shares these tips with parents so that they can support their children's physical development in similar ways at home. She recognises the particular 'schemas' or patterns of development that individual children show and responds by providing opportunities to extend this. For example, she observed that a child was more fascinated by the lid on a paint pot rather than the paint itself. She extended this fascination and manipulative skill by providing a treasure basket containing a collection of items that the child could twist, turn and unscrew. The childminder provides a regular programme of nature walks to woods and open spaces. This gives children first-hand experience of the seasons, weather, nature and life cycles. Activities are thoughtfully evaluated and extended learning opportunities are planned. For example, children recall a bluebell walk in the woods by painting what they have seen. They experiment by mixing blue and green paint and making marks to represent their own interpretation of the bluebell flowers. At other times they collect natural items on their

walks and use them in creative art projects. This means children learn to understand the world and express themselves creatively through meaningful experiences.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The childminder offers exceptionally well-managed settling in arrangements. She is highly sensitive and attuned to each child's particular needs. She works extremely closely with parents to gather as much information as possible about each child, their family and previous experiences. This helps to quickly build a holistic view of every child and positive working relationships with parents. She offers a programme of settle visits to gradually allow children to bond with her and make secure attachments. This is further enhanced by a home visit to the child's home, once they have settled in. This gives her an even greater insight into the child's life and deeper understanding of their home and family life. As children reach the stage of starting pre-school, nursery or school, the childminder fully supports them so that they are emotionally prepared. She uses books about starting school to have positive discussions about the new experience. She also focuses on building children's self-assurance and independence so that they are well equipped to manage change. Consequently, any anxieties are minimised and transitions into the childminding setting and on to other settings are as seamless as possible.

The childminder provides a wonderfully nurturing and well-resourced physical and emotional environment. She makes excellent use of every inch of space and uses masses of good quality, open-ended resources. This successfully encourages children to make independent choices about what to use. The childminder is passionate about outdoor play and the benefits of being outside. If parents wish, she enables babies to sleep outside in the fresh air to support their good health and well-being. She plans and organises her garden very thoughtfully to provide a wealth of opportunities for children to be active. This includes simple but effective use of planks and logs for balancing and coordination and a large, netted trampoline to build confidence in movement. During outdoor activities and outings children learn about safety and taking risks. The childminder frequently discusses the procedure for crossing a road safely or using tools and apparatus appropriately. They are encouraged to become aware of risk as she supports them to climb on logs in the woods. This means children gain confidence and do not become fearful of risk taking. Children are supported extremely well to manage their feelings and behaviour. The childminder works tirelessly with parents to discuss any particular issues and to find solutions to problems. In addition, she sets very clear and consistent expectations using a sensitive, nurturing approach. This is very effective in helping children to play cooperatively, share and have respect for others.

The childminder prepares healthy meals for children using fresh ingredients. These include vegetables and fruits that children help to grow in the childminder's garden. She actively involves children in preparing their meals to develop their interest in food. Parents comment that being involved has really helped their children to adopt a healthy diet and learn about food. A young child eagerly demonstrates this as he chops the carrots to add to a bolognese sauce. He shows immense concentration and control as he does so, together with a great sense of achievement. This type of activity successfully contributes to children's high levels of confidence and independence. Children quickly learn to follow

good hygiene practices, these are very well managed. They have easy access to the bathroom so that they can manage their personal care as they become ready. They fully understand the routine for washing their hands before eating or preparing food because the childminder consistently models good practice herself.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The childminder has an excellent understanding of her responsibility in meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements. She demonstrates that all adult household members undergo the necessary checks in order to protect children. She has a robust safeguarding children policy and demonstrates precisely how this is implemented. She regularly updates her knowledge of safeguarding issues by attending training. Every aspect of the provision is thoroughly risk assessed. She considers the safety of her environment, resources and activities with each child's stage of development and attendance patterns in mind. She reviews her policies and procedures each year to ensure they constantly meet requirements. Her records are well maintained and reflect the highly efficient and safe management of the setting.

The childminder is totally dedicated to professionally developing her knowledge. She attends numerous training courses, conferences and network meetings, well as, reading and researching widely. This gives her a constant source of fresh ideas to further enhance her practice. Recently, she made a 'sound line' in the garden. This innovative use of suspending metal pans, kitchen colanders and containers filled with dry pulses from a line has really captured children's imagination. After learning at a conference about the use of 'mud kitchens' to develop children's imaginative and exploratory play, she was inspired to make her own. Children love using this delightful resource in her garden, it is so enticing and well presented. They have endless scope to develop their imaginative ideas as they make pretend mud pies or ice creams with earth, flowers, leaves and wood chippings. The childminder closely monitors and has an accurate overview of the progress that children make. Currently, she is devising a tracking tool to show even more clearly how children's learning moves on over time. She believes this will help her to show parents more easily the progress their children make. She continually reflects on her practice and seeks feedback from children and parents. This helps her to expand on what works well and to identify priorities for improvement. Her plans for future development are precisely targeted on the needs of the children attending. Therefore, self-evaluation is highly effective in supporting children's achievements over time.

Partnerships with parents and other professionals are very strong. Parents wholeheartedly confirm that the childminder is unique and they are fortunate to use her. In particular, they comment on her 'excellent knowledge of child development' and 'sensitive and intelligent approach.' Parents feel fully informed and involved at all times because communication is open and transparent. The childminder uses verbal communication, text, email and daily diaries to share information and work through individual issues. The childminder makes good use of the local children's centre and signposts parents there to seek further professional guidance if required. She currently does not have any children

with special educational needs and/or disabilities on roll. However, she is experienced and knowledgeable about a range of additional needs and demonstrates that these would be met very well.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	123487
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	874755
Type of provision	Childminder
Registration category	Childminder
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	6
Number of children on roll	5
Name of provider	
Date of previous inspection	17/12/2008
Telephone number	

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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