



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123967
Inspection date	18 October 2006
Inspector	Paula Durrant
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 registered in 1990. She lives with her husband and two children, a grown-up son and an 11 year old, in a residential property on the outskirts of the town of Hertford. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding. Children requiring undisturbed sleep have access to a bedroom on the first floor. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play. The childminder is registered to provide care for a total of six children under the age of eight years and is currently minding a total of eight children, seven under the age of eight years and one over the age of eight years. She is also registered to provide care for four children under the age of five years as a temporary condition on a Monday only for a specified named child. All children currently in attendance are part-time. The family has no pets.

The childminder drives and walks to local schools to take and collect children. She makes full use of local community based amenities. 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 are extremely well protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill as the childminder rigorously adheres to environmental health guidance. For example, the home is maintained to an exceptionally high standard of cleanliness, food is stored and prepared appropriately, careful consideration is given to the management of bodily fluids and children who are unwell are actively discouraged from attending. The childminder has learnt through ongoing training, such as her Basic Food Hygiene course that germs continue to breed on contact with surfaces. She therefore has updated her practice to incorporate rigorous mechanisms, such as the use of individual kitchen towel to dry hands and pump-soap in place of bars of soap to ensure cross-contamination is effectively minimised. The childminder is highly aware of skin sensitivity. She therefore ensures all products used for her childminding purposes are non-perfumed.

Detailed written policies for health and safety, sickness and the administration of medication guide the childminder in her working practice. The childminder is highly vigilant adhering to stipulated quarantine periods for childhood diseases. She is very aware of infections causing harm to others. For example, swift intervention was applied to a child with a rather nasty cough who appeared to have difficulty in catching their breath once they coughed. The childminder promptly notified the parent who collected the child and took them to the doctors. The child remained at home following their visit to seek medical guidance. The childminder maintains a valid first aid qualification and ensures that there are sufficient medical supplies within her first aid resources. All required systems for documenting accidental injury and medication administered are in place and effectively maintained. The childminder is extremely aware that current contractual agreements do not provide consent from parents for seeking emergency medical aid or advise. She has therefore devised her own separate appendices to ensure that she remains fully compliant with the National Standards.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene practices as they follow the daily routine. For example, they know to wash their hands following use of the toilet, prior to eating and when returning from outside play. They understand the purpose behind this task as discussions about germs are frequently held.

Children receive a highly nutritious and balanced diet. All meals are cooked from fresh raw ingredients with consideration to use of organic produce as and where appropriate. Children actively participate in the preparation of meals as they undertake regular trips to the local supermarket to purchase the ingredients for their meals. This provides plentiful opportunities to talk and learn about food that is good for them and food that is less beneficial in their diet through meaningful life experiences. The childminder is aware that some children may have individual dietary needs. She has previous experience of caring for a child with a dairy and gluten restricted diet. She worked closely with parents to ensure meals were compliant with the child's needs in order that produce given did not exacerbate their condition. Implementation of a detailed sample menu supports the childminder and parents in agreeing and altering food provision accordingly.

Children stay well hydrated as drinks are offered frequently throughout the day. Younger children have their cups refilled when they are empty, whilst older children know to ask permission and seek their own drinks at their leisure. The childminder has a very good understanding of why children must drink fluids. Water is preferential as the childminder recognises this is a healthier fluid which does not affect their diet or damage their teeth.

Children take part in regular physical activity. Although the childminder has a car which she can use for transporting children she does not do so unless the location of where she needs to go is outside of the children's ability to complete the distance comfortably for themselves. She leads by example, teaching children that walking is good for them as they can gain fresh air and exercise their large muscles as they walk, run, hop and skip on the journey to and from school. She also ensures children have daily access to the garden, where there is an array of challenging resources, in addition to local parks and playgrounds. Children benefit in developing their fine muscle movements as they cut, thread and draw with a range of tools.

Children rest and are active in accordance to their needs. Younger children sleep in line with home-care routines, whilst older children have regular opportunities to sit quietly looking at books, playing board games or watching child-centred television programmes to recuperate their energy levels.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are really well cared for in an exceptionally welcoming, clean, safe and secure home environment. The childminder uses space in a highly creative manner to enable children to access toys independently and safely. The entrance foyer provides a source of valuable information for parents and conveys that children's needs are paramount in this setting. For example, photographs, certificates and procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency assure parents that their children are in safe hands.

Children independently select activities from a diverse range of good quality resources and equipment, which meet safety standards. The childminder carefully monitors and supervises children's choice of toys to make sure they are safe and appropriate for their age and stage of development. Good organisational forethought, such as the use of differing locations of the home when younger and older children are in attendance means that all children access a range of stimulating equipment and activities they enjoy.

Children are able to move around and play safely, freely and independently because the childminder has identified and minimised all risks, expertly balancing freedom for children and setting safe limits. Children actively learn to keep themselves safe because the childminder has clear rules and routines in order to maintain their safety inside and outside the home. For example, the childminder reminds the children to sit down when eating and explains the reason why this is necessary. She raises awareness of road safety when out teaching children why they must wear safety restraints in the car and exit only when the car has come to a halt.

The childminder safeguards children's welfare and has all of the required policies and documents in place. The childminder carries comprehensive contact details on her person at all times.

Excellent practices actively contribute to the safety of children such as, thorough, written risk assessments, extensive and detailed emergency evacuation procedures, frequently practised fire drills and open discussions about road safety when out on walks. Children are very safe with the childminder as she has a robust knowledge and understanding of child protection in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have an extremely sound and secure relationship with the childminder. They are content and comfortable in separating from their parents, eagerly settling to play on arrival. They know that they are safe and that when they feel insecure that the childminder will provide them with the reassurance they require. For example, the childminder was quick to inform the inspector on arrival that a particular child was not confident with people they did not know. This enabled the inspector to sit away from the child allowing them time and space to adapt to the situation and to manage their emotions.

Children thrive in the childminder's care. She provides them with a varied range of practical activities which she plans in advance. This supports implementation of a familiar daily routine giving children an understanding of what is happening when and where. It also guides the childminder in ensuring variety across all developmental areas in the types of activities she provides. Children are happy to play independently or together. They respect the diversity of ages in attendance, such as an older toddler was considerate to the location of a younger non-mobile baby as they walked carefully around the child laying on their play mat to gain a book from the sofa. Older school aged children thoroughly enjoy the presence of younger children. They are happy to sit alongside the younger children playing with less challenging resources in addition to participating in age-appropriate play, such as completing 'floam' pictures, playing with board games or building with construction kits.

Children are very confident in expressing their thoughts and ideas. They know that they can make suggestions and alter the activities that are pre-planned by the childminder should they feel the desire to play something else. The childminder is very competent at taking her lead from the children in her care. She uses her training in childcare and her many years experience of minding to ensure that children's voices are actively heard. She recognises that care of younger children and older children is very different. Younger children are content to have continued involvement whilst older children prefer the relaxed approach of less direction and engagement in their play.

The childminder has developed her awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework through reading the literature and watching the video from the resource pack. She has a clear understanding of the components and how these correlate to children's developmental milestones. Although she has an awareness, she is yet to effectively incorporate her knowledge into working practice. The childminder is shortly due to attend a training course in this subject matter which she feels will support her in developing further her current systems to enable a more proactive approach to using the framework on a day-to-day basis with the younger children in her care, correlating play plans cohesively with observations in order to set the next steps in children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs take high priority in this home from home provision. A superb partnership with parents enables children to receive extended family care. The childminder knows the children well and uses information gained from parents to implement highly effective care plans for each child. Mutual respect, love and understanding all play an integral part of the childminders practice. Children are exceptionally polite, courteous and respectful of the childminder and her home. They know the house rules and use social graces, such as please and thank you without prompt. Children play an active part in their own learning. They make independent decisions in their play. They have positive levels of self-esteem and respect the opinions and actions of others because the childminder consistently praises their efforts and reaffirms their achievements, guiding their social and moral development. Behaviour is exemplary. The childminder has a written complaints procedure in line with current legislative changes. This remains empty.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The childminder adopts a highly professional, conscientious approach to her childminding and is extremely confident in her childcare practice. She is constantly seeking ways to improve her skills and is happy to incorporate any suggestions which might further enhance her provision for children and their parents. The childminder uses her maternal experience, her qualification in childcare, her firm commitment to continued training and her effective organisation to promote positive outcomes for children.

Children feel very much at home and are comfortable in the well-organised, suitably prepared and inviting family environment. The childminder enriches children's care, learning and play through her constant enthusiasm, interaction and inventiveness. Children confidently choose activities and participate with eager relish. Children extend their own play and learning in a natural and imaginative way, strongly encouraged by the childminder's expert practice. Her clear use of written procedures and routines which cover all aspects of the National Standards effectively supports children's welfare, care and learning and underpins her professional practice.

All written parental permissions are in place and documentation is reviewed periodically and changes implemented where appropriate to comply with current guidance. The childminder gives utmost priority to maintaining relevant and up-to-date knowledge of child care in this rapidly changing field of expertise. She uses childcare literature and the local authority training manual to maintain and improve her skills. The childminder offers high quality opportunities which are rooted in an expert knowledge of childcare and development. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the childminder was required to ensure that times of arrival and departure are included in the record of attendance. This is now in place.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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):

- enhance current systems to support greater effectiveness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in practice, this refers to correlation and extension of play plans and observation systems.

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