



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	149356
Inspection date	25 April 2006
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
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 was registered in 1995. She lives with her husband and 2 children aged 12 and 8 years, in the Chells Manor area of Stevenage. The whole of the ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of 5 children at any one time and is currently minding 2 children under 5 on a full-time basis and 1 child over 5 after school and during school holidays. The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children. She attends the local toddler group. The family has 2 cats, a rabbit and 3 gerbils as pets.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean home. Their health and development are well promoted through their participation in a variety of physical activities. They are developing their physical skills and co-ordination through regular opportunities for outdoor activities. These include visits to the local park where they use the play equipment and have space to run and play games. They also enjoy playing in the garden with equipment such as the slide, cube, push-along toys, bikes, hoops, skipping ropes, the golf set and skittles. Structured activities such as music and movement sessions further promote children's development in this area.

Children's dietary needs are clearly understood and recorded and the childminder ensures that they have access to drinking water at all times. The spread of infection is minimised as there are effective hygiene practices in place, such as washing hands after handling the pets and before cooking activities. However, there is limited discussion about these practices and children's understanding of their relevance is therefore not consistently promoted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's daily safety is prioritised and the childminder is aware of potential risks and takes steps to minimise these, for example, checking all areas of the park before children use it. Children are therefore able to move around safely and independently, both within the childminder's home and outside. They use safe toys and equipment and the childminder makes sure that these are appropriate for their ages and developmental stages and are easily accessible.

Children are beginning to build up their knowledge about keeping themselves safe. They are well informed as the childminder consistently offers them clear explanations, for example, they know why it is important not to run inside the house. The childminder also talks with them about road safety and practises emergency evacuation procedures with them. The children's welfare is effectively promoted because the childminder has a sound knowledge of her responsibilities regarding child protection and has made sure that she has all relevant information and paperwork to enable her to record, report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident and settled, happily choosing activities and moving around the childminder's home. They have very good relationships with the childminder who shows them that she thoroughly enjoys their company, joining in with their play and conversations and helping them to feel welcome and valued. Children become engrossed in their play and are content to play with the childminder, independently or with each other, happily organising games and creating role play scenarios. Younger children also have opportunities to play and socialise with other children through regular attendance at a local toddler group.

Children are offered a wide variety of activities which enhance their learning in all areas. These include cooking, making play dough, growing bulbs, stencilling, puppet-making, playing with bubbles, feeding the ducks and collecting leaves to make a collage. Children talk enthusiastically about their activities, for example, discussing how they made bread and banana cake, remembering the ingredients and how the dough rose. They also enjoy additional activities such as trips to the farm and parks. Their overall development is promoted and they are encouraged to extend their knowledge because the childminder has a good understanding of child development. This ensures that children are offered a balanced range of play opportunities which cover all areas of learning. The childminder makes good use of open questions and gentle suggestions to encourage children to think further and extend their play. Children acquire skills and knowledge through their play because the childminder is skilled in incorporating learning into play and everyday activities. Examples of this include encouraging children to weigh fruit when out shopping, and talking about concepts such as the difference between pushing and pulling when opening doors or playing with a car on the floor.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are equally welcomed and are able to feel at home because the childminder respects their individuality and is aware of all individual needs. Their behaviour is very good and they competently organise sharing and turn-taking. They are very thoughtful and express their concern for each other, for example, older children tell younger ones how much they miss them when they are not with the childminder. Children are set consistent boundaries and are given clear explanations by the childminder, enabling them to make informed decisions and begin to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The childminder acts as a good role model, remaining calm and polite at all times, and the children mirror this behaviour, promoting a calm, relaxed atmosphere.

Children are offered a variety of opportunities to learn about their community and wider society through the provision of a wide range of resources, discussions about differences and outings to local facilities such as parks, shops and the toddler group. Their personal and social development are fostered by the childminder who appreciates the challenges faced by individual children and does her best to help them overcome these positively. An example of this is implementing a routine to help children settle at pre-school, which enables them to express their feelings about this and to feel proud of how they are dealing with the situation.

The childminder has good relationships with parents, which contributes significantly to the children's well-being and development. Parents are given clear information, are encouraged to discuss any issues or concerns as they arise and are fully aware of the complaints procedure. The childminder makes very good use of daily diaries for each child and talks with parents at the end of each session to ensure that they are fully informed about how their children are progressing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the needs of all children attending are met. They are able to feel comfortable and relaxed, assured that their needs are met due to the childminder's practical organisation of her work. They are always given plenty of time to play, eat and relax because the childminder organises her time well and ensures that she is able to meet all commitments, such as collecting children from school or pre-school on time. All paperwork is in place and is well organised and easily accessible. However, the times of children's attendance are recorded in their individual diaries and this could lead to confusion should a diary not be available or in an emergency situation where all children need to be accounted for.

Children are very confident within the childminder's home and are therefore able to initiate their own play and learning. They enjoy the childminder's company and input but are also happy to play independently, knowing that the childminder is always available to help them when needed. The varying individual needs of the children are well documented and consistently met by the childminder. Their development in all areas is promoted as a result of the childminder's attention to detail in the organisation of all activities and daily routines. This ensures that children are always offered a range of stimulating activities and opportunities and that all are able to participate.

Improvements since the last inspection

At her last inspection, the childminder was asked to ensure that she was aware of procedures to follow regarding complaints or child protection issues. She is now aware of her responsibilities regarding recording complaints and responding to these, clearly displaying Ofsted's details so that they are easily accessible to parents. The childminder has made sure that she has all relevant details to enable her to contact social services and report any concerns. These measures further promote children's safety and welfare.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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

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 procedures to encourage children's understanding of the relevance of hygiene practices
- review the method for recording children's attendance so that an accessible record is available which can be viewed on request.

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