

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	149452
Inspection date	03/06/2009
Inspector	Anna Davies
Type of setting	Childminder

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the childminding

The childminder was registered in 1995. She lives with her husband and two children aged 13 and 15 years in the town of Baldock, Hertfordshire. The whole of the childminder's house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outside play. Access into and out of the childminder's home is at ground level and there are downstairs toilet facilities.

The childminder is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of five children under eight years at any one time. There are currently three children on roll, two of whom are within the early years age range. The provision is also registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register, offering care to children aged over five years to 11 years. The house is within walking distance of local amenities such as schools, the library, shops and parks. The family has two pet dogs.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding. The needs of all children in the childminder's care are exceptionally well met in a highly professional and inclusive environment focussing very much on promoting individualised learning for each child. They are offered a wide range of meaningful activities and experiences to support their developmental needs and interests and as a result make excellent progress in their learning and development. Partnerships with parents are highly effective which has a positive impact on children's care and learning. The childminder demonstrates an utmost commitment to continually monitoring, evaluating and further improving her practice and has very effective systems in place to ensure she is able to do this.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- developing further ways of incorporating observations from parents about their children's learning at home so that this information can be used to further enhance assessment arrangements.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Areas where children play are bright, airy and spacious and all toys and resources are stored at low-level to ensure that they can be freely accessed. A wide range of toys and play equipment are provided which are age-appropriate and in excellent condition. The childminder provides a fully inclusive service ensuring that she is fully aware of children's ongoing, individual welfare and learning needs.

All documentation and record keeping is professionally maintained which promotes the safety and welfare of the children and underpins the high quality care offered. The childminder works in close partnership with parents to ensure the continuity of care and education offered. Formal feedback from questionnaires, references and thank you letters from parents past and present speak very highly of the quality of care and learning opportunities offered. They are regularly informed of their children's achievements and progress both verbally and through the children's 'Learning journeys' and the childminder is currently considering further ways to enhance her assessment procedures with contributions from parents with regards to their own observations of their children.

Since the last inspection, the childminder has attended many training workshops to keep her knowledge of childcare practice up-to-date and relevant and has also completed her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3; information from which, she uses to fully underpin the high quality of care she offers. The childminder has excellent systems of self-evaluation and continually moves her provision forwards for the benefit of the children. She strives to always offer the best quality care and education that she can and has clear plans for the future which will further promote positive outcomes for children. For example, she has plans to improve the back garden to further enhance children's safety and to develop regular newsletters for parents.

The childminder has a very secure knowledge and understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and is clear about the procedures to follow should she have concerns. Rigorous risk assessments are in place for all aspects of the environment and all outings undertaken with children. As a result, children play in a very safe and secure environment where their safety is always at the forefront of the childminder's mind.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The childminder plans and provides a wide range of activities to thoroughly engage children's interests and help them to make considerable progress in all areas of learning. Systems to monitor children's progress are very well established. When children first start, information relating to children's starting points is obtained both from parents and from initial observations conducted by the childminder which ensures that activities and learning experiences can be planned to meet their needs straight away. Regular focussed and spontaneous observations are recorded in individual 'Learning journey' folders as well as photographs and examples of their work. Children's progress is reviewed every few weeks and documented. Next steps are clearly identified and the childminder formulates an individual learning plan for each child across all six areas of learning. This information is used effectively by the childminder as she supports the activities and experiences that she provides for each of the children.

Children are very happy and settled in the childminder's care and have formed strong attachments with her. They really enjoy her company as she plays with them at their level; they confidently interact with her, accept her praise and give her cuddles spontaneously. The childminder interacts enthusiastically with children,

asking questions and ensuring that the most is made of spontaneous learning opportunities such as when a child hears an aeroplane in the sky. She has an excellent understanding of how young children learn for example, she uses props when introducing numeracy and simple calculation in favourite books and constantly promotes their language and vocabulary development as well as problem solving skills during their play activities. Children enjoy a wide range of activities encouraging them to learn about the world around them. For example, children visit a Lavender farm and the childminder ensures such visits have clear learning intentions such as using maps of the farm to decide where to start picking the lavender from, counting the stems picked, discussing its feel and smell and valuing children's creativity as they make bouquets from the lavender for their parents. Children are encouraged to appreciate and embrace diversity through the resources they use and through sensitive discussion about 'uniqueness' in relation to cultures, backgrounds and abilities as well as activities such as traditional multicultural cooking and food tasting. Children have ample space to develop their physical skills together with frequent visits to the park, use of the childminder's garden and visits to the local soft play centre.

Children learn how to stay safe from a young age. For example, lift the flap books about safety in the home enable younger children to learn simple safety rules in a fun and meaningful way and older children are advised about stranger danger and their personal safety when on outings. Children are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle; they are positively encouraged to follow good hygiene routines from a young age, are encouraged to make healthy choices as they visit the local farm shop to choose fruit for their snacks and take part in cooking activities and tasting sessions to promote an enjoyment of food. For example, they make strawberry jam, picking the fruit themselves and decorating jars for the jam to go in. They are encouraged to understand the importance of exercise and this is promoted in a fun way for example by dancing to music and stretching whilst having fun. Meals are generally provided by the parents and the childminder works with them to ensure that contents are healthy and nutritious. Effective records of accidents and the administration of any medication are maintained which safeguards children's welfare. The childminder has a clear understanding of age-appropriate behaviour management strategies and constantly promotes positive behaviour by praising children and offering reward stickers as well as 'clapping' younger children's achievements which boosts self-esteem and confidence. House rules have been devised by children and are clearly displayed so that expectations are clear. Good manners are encouraged and the childminder states that these are often positively commented upon by other people when she is out and about with the children.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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