



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	149628
Inspection date	06 February 2007
Inspector	Sarah Catherine Jex
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 1999. She lives with her partner and two children aged eight and 15 in the town of Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

The whole 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 six children at any one time and is currently minding five children, who attend at various times and on various days of the week. The childminder walks to school to take and collect children. She attends local childminder support groups and takes children to the local library and park.

The family has a pet guinea pig and two rabbits

The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association and has been awarded Herts Quality Standards Kitemark.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health and well-being are very well-promoted as the childminder is extremely effective in implementing current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. Children are effectively encouraged to participate and learn about keeping themselves clean and healthy. They stay healthy because the childminder consistently talks about germs and personal hygiene within the daily routine, so that it becomes second nature to children. The childminder asks questions that make children think for themselves and to consolidate their learning. For example, she asks 'what do we do if we cough?' and 'why do we wash our hands before snack?'. The childminder is an excellent role model for the children to follow. She adheres to exceedingly strict procedures when changing nappies and explains to the children what she is doing and why. This helps them to imitate good practice and gain a sound understanding which ensures they learn about health and hygiene practices in a meaningful way. Extremely sound procedures are in place for children who are unwell. This safeguards the good health of the other children who attend the provision. Individual and personal information is discussed to ensure health and medical needs are identified and recorded thoroughly. The childminder rigorously maintains an accident and medication book in accordance with requirements. Children receive appropriate first aid because the childminder holds and regularly updates a suitable first aid qualification.

Children are positively encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle because the childminder provides healthy snacks and meals that promote children's knowledge and understanding of nutritional issues through discussion and various cooking activities. She always ensures that fresh fruit and vegetables are available for children. They begin to understand the benefits of a healthy diet as they enjoy home-cooked food from fresh ingredients. The childminder shows the planned menus, which are on a three week rotation, to parents. Children's favourite meals are tuna pasta bake, risotto, home made soup, macaroni cheese, fish, rice pudding, ice cream and fruit salad. The childminder meets specific dietary needs within the varied menu available to the children and respects parental wishes and preferences. The children sit at the table to eat, learn good manners and social rules. At snack time the children are actively encouraged to spread cream cheese on their crackers and the childminder is on hand to offer assistance when needed. Children are positively encouraged to drink water which is freely and constantly available. They have designated cups and are able to choose from a selection offered by the childminder. Children access these at anytime as they play both indoors and outside. They recognise that drink is as much an important part of their daily intake as food is and understand the need to replenish their fluid levels in order to stay healthy.

Children are able to play an active role in keeping themselves healthy. They enjoy different physical activities that help their development. These include playing in the outdoor area and taking daily walks to the local park and school. They run, walk and climb, recognising that this type of activity helps to keep them fit and healthy. Children also have access to a wide range

of indoor activities that increase their fine finger movements and hand-eye co-ordination, such as, painting, threading and using malleable materials like play dough. The childminder has a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This is reflected in the exceptional and regular opportunities to enhance the development of young children's large muscle movements. The childminder has a thorough understanding of appropriate types of activities and levels of need for each child, this includes children being able to sleep or rest in a suitable quiet area of the house.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. The childminder safeguards children's welfare and has a good awareness of safety. Space and resources are organised so children are able to explore and take risks in a safe, controlled environment. Children independently select from an excellent range of toys and play resources, which meet safety standards. Children's safety is well promoted by the childminder carrying out regular checks on toys and equipment. An informal risk assessment is carried out on the premises, toys and activities to ensure potential risks are identified and minimised. However, evidence of this is not in place. Therefore this could compromise children's safety.

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 not to run in the house and explains the reason why this is necessary. The childminder safeguards children's welfare and has all of the required policies and documents in place. Excellent practices, such as detailed emergency evacuation procedures and frequently practised fire drills, actively contribute to the safety of children. Records indicate the children have learnt the procedure. The childminder engages the children in open discussions about road safety when out on walks and about how to keep themselves safe when away from the childminder's home. They use appropriate procedures to ensure they cross the road correctly and stay alert as they cross. Supervision is of a high standard

The childminder has stringent procedures in place for the safe collection of children. Parents inform her if the arrangements change at any time. The childminder has completed a suitable training course to provide her with a robust knowledge of child protection issues. Parents are fully informed of the childminder's responsibilities through discussion and her written policy. Children are therefore kept safe and are suitably protected from harm or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely confident, very independent and develop self-esteem by the childminder encouraging them to try new activities and giving praise. They settle quickly in the friendly, relaxed family atmosphere where the childminder carefully prepares her home in readiness for the children. Children make independent choices in their play and are able to choose from an extensive range of toys and equipment, which are all stored within easy reach. They have access to a superb range of planned, stimulating and challenging opportunities and activities. These

include music, cooking, creative work, outings, stories along with first-hand experiences such as gardening, cooking and shopping. Children's play is promoted through the childminder's infectious enthusiasm and passion for having fun and fits of laughter echo around the house. Activities are appropriate for individual children's development, enabling them to move forward at their own pace. Children are encouraged to develop imaginative play, explore feelings and family relationships. Children enjoy making tea and dinner in the play kitchen as well as riding around on the hobby horses. Children have an excellent rapport with the childminder. Themes are carried out throughout the week and children develop rapidly due to the care and excellent preparation which goes into the planning and implementation of the activities. These are linked to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and some with the areas of learning of the Foundation Stage. Regular observations of children's learning and stages of development enable the childminder to have a clear understanding of children's abilities. She uses this to plan, track and to set further challenges in order to promote children's continued progress. For example, children who are learning to count or recognise shapes have extensive opportunities to practise and consolidate their achievements such as counting the stairs when finished using the bathroom or finding other objects which match the colours or shapes. Children's individual needs and stages of development are considered and activities are often adapted to ensure all children present can participate. This builds their confidence, a sense of belonging and ensures their individual needs are being met.

The childminder encourages the children to develop social skills by meeting new people and to try new activities promoting the growth of their confidence and self-esteem. Trusting and secure relationships develop between the children and the childminder who manages the children very well, whilst allowing them the chance to express their needs. Children's language skills are developed through the effective questioning techniques used by the childminder. Children are highly valued and the childminder listens and responds to what they have to say. Children feel a sense of belonging and are very relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings. Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong as they play together because the childminder reminds them to be kind to each other. The childminder is highly attentive to the needs of the children and ensures they have a balanced programme of activities throughout the day.

The childminder has an exceptionally competent understanding of child development rooted in her knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. She is committed to updating her training to enhance and guide her practice. This supports the provision of flexible, high quality care expertly tailored to each individual child's needs. Children are busy and engaged in both self-chosen and adult-led activities. High quality interaction provides excellent support for children's early communication skills as the childminder introduces new language. For example, describing what they are doing when playing with the play dough such as squeezing, rolling, squashing along with making patterns and introducing new words such as zig-zag, straight and round. Children develop their mathematical skills and language with the childminder as she makes full use of small domestic tasks such as pegging out the washing, counting and matching. The childminder skilfully encourages children to make very rapid progress in their development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children become aware of wider society and learn to respect the needs of others. They see positive images that promote race, culture, disability and gender in books, dolls, play figures, puzzles and activities to celebrate festivals. This increases children's awareness of diversity and their understanding of others. Activities are adapted to meet the needs of all children and a sensitive approach ensures children can play without fear of prejudice. The childminder knows the children very well and is responsive to their needs. For example, if a child needs extra reassurance or cuddles this is happily provided and children respond positively, knowing they can climb up for a cuddle at any time.

Children are well behaved. Through the good examples set by the childminder and appropriate strategies used children are learning to manage their own behaviour, find solutions to conflict and show respect for the needs of others. Children are considerate, share, take turns and are polite, whilst remembering to say please and thank you. The childminder provides a range of opportunities for children to socialise and make positive relationships. Their confidence and self-esteem is developed by the praise and encouragement received from the childminder who knows the children well. This enables her to set realistic challenges and promote the children's sense of belonging. Children feel relaxed and secure and able to make independent choices and try new experiences which aid their development.

Parents actively contribute towards their children's learning and development because they remain fully informed. This highly effective two-way communication process enables parents to fully participate in their child's daily activities. The childminder has excellent systems in place to inform parents about the children's activities and work. She maintains a detailed written diary system and observations for all children. A noticeboard provides excellent information and photographs which enable parents to see their children at play. The childminder invites parents to make their own written contributions and they eagerly respond giving positive comments on the service provided. A comprehensive portfolio is in place for parents which give information detailing all aspects of the childminder's practice such as written policies, procedures and contracts. These are reviewed regularly and are kept up to date. Parents have a copy of the policies and procedures to refer to if needed. Parents are aware of how to make a complaint and a good system is in place for recording them. Children's well-being is fully promoted because the childminder is committed to working in partnership with the parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children's needs are met through successful organisation and communication with parents. Space and equipment is prepared so that children can access resources easily and independently. This enables them to self select their activities and play safely. Children benefit from flexible routines which make them feel secure and relaxed. They are able to play, eat, sleep and rest according to their individual needs. The childminder arranges her time well to ensure children's needs are met and they receive good levels of attention. Children are confident and enthusiastic when participating in the various fun, stimulating and challenging activities, when initiating

and extending their own play and learning in a natural and imaginative way. This is strongly encouraged by the childminder's excellent practice.

Documentation is stored securely and information shared appropriately with parents. Written policies and procedures are in place to help keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. Confidentiality is adhered to and information is shared appropriately to respect the children and their parents. The childminder has followed appropriate procedures to ensure that all members of the household are vetted and suitable. She is committed to keeping her knowledge up to date and has attended various training courses. She uses childcare literature and the local authority training manuals to maintain and improve her skills. She welcomes new ideas and continually strives to develop her practice. She organises her time very well to ensure that children have individual attention where possible. She provides a range of exciting and stimulating opportunities, and makes good use of a local toy library to support these activities.

The childminder has a professional yet caring and sensitive approach to her work which is clearly demonstrated in her practice. This ensures each child's potential is recognised and activities support and challenge each child. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the childminder agreed to complete the following recommendations. To review recording procedures for information regarding hours of attendance and existing injuries.

Since the last inspection the childminder has reviewed her procedures with regard to recording the minded children's hours of attendance by ensuring the register is kept up to date and parents sign to say they acknowledge that the entries are correct. Procedures for the documentation of accidents has been reviewed and she now ensures they are recorded correctly with parents signatures against each entry. This positively promotes the children's welfare and safety.

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

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):

- provide evidence that a risk assessment is carried out to ensure all areas of risk are identified and minimised

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