

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	07/02/2011
Inspector	Hilary Preece
Type of setting	Childminder

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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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the childminding

The childminder was registered in 1999. She lives with her partner, one adult child and child aged 12 years. They live in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The childminding mainly takes place on the ground floor of the house with access to the bathroom and a bedroom for sleeping on the first floor. There is an enclosed garden available for outdoor play. The childminder does not drive but walks to local schools to take and collect children. There is a pet rabbit.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children under eight years at any one time, of whom no more than three may be in the early years age range. There are currently five children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage, all of whom attend on a part time basis. The childminder also offers care to children aged over five years. She is registered on the Early Years Register and both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association. She has a Level 3 Qualification in Early Years Care and Education and completed the Herts Quality Standards quality assurance award in 2006.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

A highly developed knowledge of each child's needs and of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework ensures children make significant gains in their learning and development. Rigorous attention is given to ensuring children's health, safety and well-being are promoted to high standards at all times. Partnerships with parents and in the wider context are very strong and make sure the needs of all children are met extremely well. In-depth monitoring and evaluation of practice based on the needs of children and parents using the service means there is excellent capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- reviewing the information provided for parents with regard to the procedure for making complaints.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The childminder has a robust knowledge of safeguarding issues and confidently implements her procedures in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance. She updates her knowledge at regular intervals through training and reading. She is vigilant in supervising children at all times and complies with

vetting arrangements for all adults living in the household. Clear emergency arrangements exist with another childminder to ensure children are always cared for by responsible persons. There is an extremely comprehensive range of policies and procedures that underpin her practice and successfully promote children's security, safety and well-being. Methodical records showing when risk assessments are carried out are kept and all other records are well maintained. All policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and available to parents so they are very well informed. However, the complaints procedure is not as clear as it could be.

Highly positive working relationships with parents exist. Effective communication in many different forms is encouraged in order to fully meet children's needs. Parents benefit from regular discussions, written diaries, detailed learning journals as well as emails and texts. Clear information is given about the Early Years Foundation Stage and how children's learning can be supported at home. This ensures they are involved in all aspects of their children's care and development. They also have access to a wealth of information about general issues such as child health, behaviour or local community resources if needed. All of this is readily accessible alongside the welcoming parent notice board that greets parents on arrival. Comments from parents are extremely complimentary and state that children are 'very happy, secure and develop extremely well' at the setting. The childminder is highly committed to working in partnership with others where appropriate. She has developed strong links and usefully shares learning and development records in order to set and work toward common goals for children's development. Consequently, children are fully supported to make very good progress.

The childminder is highly effective in driving improvement because she sets high expectations and has a clear vision of how she will achieve her plans. She very carefully monitors her training needs and accesses an extensive range of training courses and qualifications in order to further develop her skills and knowledge. Strong links with local community groups for children allow her to share good practice and seek guidance where needed. Self-evaluation is extremely rigorous and child centred. The childminder uses local authority quality assurance programmes to reflect upon and evaluate every aspect of her practice, including the children's needs, in order to identify what works well and what would benefit from change. She acts upon the views of parents to introduce, for example, more cooking activities and more frequent opportunities to take home children's learning records. Children are heavily involved in decision making. When planning improvements to the outdoor play area the childminder gathers children's ideas about what they would like, how they could be developed and enables all children to make personal choices about what vegetables they would like to grow. Children contribute first hand to the 'garden plan' scrapbook which fosters a tremendous sense of ownership and belonging. Resources overall are of high quality and varied. Creative use of play space in the home enables children to feel settled and secure because everything they need is easily accessible. The childminder is constantly looking for new ways to develop the environment to extend children's learning opportunities, from the development of the sensory garden to the cosy cushioned area draped with soft fabrics. She considers issues of sustainability of resources by using old school shirts as children's cooking or painting aprons.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are supported extremely well because the childminder is particularly knowledgeable about how children learn and develop and knows individual children exceptionally well. This enables her to make very astute observations of children which she uses expertly to plan for their further learning development. She provides rich, varied and imaginative experiences that meet all children's needs. The environment is planned very thoughtfully and imaginatively to encourage children to explore and be purposefully engaged in play. They love expressing their ideas in their own way by exploring the dressing up resources, trying on different shoes and draping themselves in a very long sari. Plenty of learning takes place naturally as the childminder guides children in their play and encourages their thinking, language and problem solving. Children readily apply their knowledge during activities such as counting out slices of bread and recognising the shape of their sandwiches. They measure and compare the height of the beans that they grow, weigh ingredients when cooking and predict what happens when solid chocolate is heated. Children chatter confidently to the childminder and love to listen to stories. Books are beautifully presented in a low wicker basket which encourages children to explore them easily and independently. This is complemented by regular trips to the library and the use of props and puppets to bring stories to life. A wide range of age-appropriate mark making opportunities in sand, paint and shaving foam are provided by the childminder and at groups that children attend with her so that they can explore early writing. Activities are adapted to meet the needs of individual children so all are enabled to take part and develop confidence. For example, a child who is reluctant to touch the paint is encouraged to roll a favourite car through it to make tyre tracks instead.

Children display highly positive and confident relationships and social skills. They interact extremely well in a relaxed manner with each other and other adults and thus feel very safe. They enthusiastically cooperate to tidy away the toys and take turns when using resources. Many opportunities are provided for children to work together in a group, such as, children of different ages contributing to making an autumn collage. Children show mature levels of independence and understanding about health and safety. They recognise when they need to blow their nose, find the tissue box and dispose of the used tissue safely and hygienically. They safely use specially designed children's knives to chop up cucumber for their sandwiches and patiently persist in order to accomplish the task. All the time the childminder reinforces their safety by reminding them how to use the knife safely and hold the food steady with the other hand. Children therefore persist with a task and gain a great sense of satisfaction with their achievements.

Children learn about the world through wonderful practical experiences. By planting, nurturing, harvesting and cooking vegetables in the garden, children realise where some foods come from. They even watch the potatoes chitting on the windowsill before they are planted out. They also find out about the life cycle of animals by visiting a local school to watch chicks hatch out of their eggs. They walk extensively in the local area, visit a range of parks and develop confident physical skills as they are introduced to gradually more challenging play apparatus.

Thoughtful activities are planned to help children recognise diversity and difference. For example, they find out about the Hindu festival of Diwali by observing Rangoli patterns painted on hands and designing their own patterns. The childminder actively involves children in using technology by encouraging them to take photographs on the digital camera and use the computer and printer to print them off. As a result of the rich and varied experiences provided, children make significant gains in their learning and are very well prepared for the future.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	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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