



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203237
Inspection date	31 October 2006
Inspector	Jima Fotopoulou
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 2000. She lives with her husband and three children aged nine months, four and 13 years. They live in a residential area of Chelmsford. The whole of the property is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of four children under eight years at any one time and is currently minding three children, one of whom attends on a full-time basis. The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children. The childminder attends the local parent and toddler group. The family has fish as pets.

The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene due to the childminder's established routines. They are aware that they need to wash their hands before meals, after using the toilet or after messy play. The childminder provides older children with paper towels in order to protect them from cross-infections. Younger children's health and well-being is effectively promoted as the childminder has very good routines in place for changing nappies which includes wearing gloves and washing her hands after each change. Younger children are protected from cross-infection as the childminder provides them with separate towels.

Children enjoy a healthy and balanced diet which complies with individual dietary requirements. All snacks are very hygienically prepared as the childminder ensures that all work surfaces in the kitchen are thoroughly cleaned beforehand and uses different boards for preparing different types of food. The childminder liaises effectively with the parents and she is aware of any allergies or specific dietary requirements. She ensures that these are recorded on the child's records in order to protect children's health. Children learn about health eating through play and discussions; they get involved in preparing their snacks and the childminder ensures that healthy options are always available to children. The childminder has devised suggested menus which she shares with the parents in order to ensure that they are fully informed about the types of food their children receive whilst in her care. Children have their meals sitting at the table which means that the childminder is aware of the social aspects of meal times. Drinks are available to children at all times to ensure that they remain sufficiently hydrated throughout the day.

Children are protected from illness due to the childminder's effective procedures. All of the required documentation is in place to support the childminder such as a medication book and a written sick child policy which is shared with the parents during the initial visit. The childminder has obtained most of the required parental consents to ensure that children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. However, parental consents for seeking emergency treatment or advice and for administering non-prescribed medication are not in place to ensure children's health. Children are able to sleep or rest according to their needs and they are provided with individual bedding which ensures their well-being.

Children enjoy going on outings with the childminder such as visits to the local park, to toddler groups and soft ball pool areas which help them develop their physical and social skills. The childminder has obtained the required parental consents in order to ensure children's safety. Children enjoy access to a safe and secure garden with a wide range of toys and resources which helps them be active and develop their skills. For example, children enjoy riding wheeled toys which promote their spatial awareness; they develop imagination as they play with outdoor 'pretend' play equipment and have fun learning about quantity and capacity playing with sand or water.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy access to a warm and welcoming environment which allows them to play in safety and comfort. Children's work is very nicely displayed on the walls which help children feel valued. Toys and resources are easily accessible and stored appropriately which means that children's independence is actively fostered. The childminder ensures that all toys and equipment are checked as an ongoing process and at the end of each day and has a written cleaning rota in place to ensure that they remain safe and suitable for the children to use. Children have free access to age-appropriate toys and resources; the childminder is extremely vigilant and ensures that unsuitable toys are kept out of their reach. The childminder has a health and safety policy in place in order to support her practice and ensure children's well-being.

Children enjoy playing in a safe environment as the childminder has all the fire safety equipment in place such as smoke alarms on both floors and a fire blanket in the kitchen; the smoke alarms are checked regularly and all checks are recorded in order to ensure children's safety. The childminder has a written fire evacuation procedure in place; she carries out regular fire drills with the children in order to ensure that they are aware of the appropriate action to take in case of a fire and these are recorded in the fire drills log book. Children's safety indoors is extremely well promoted due to the childminder's professionalism; she carries out formal risk assessments on a regular basis where all parts of the premises are checked to ensure that they are safe for the children. In addition the childminder carries out informal risk assessments on a daily basis in order to ensure children's safety. All safety related documentation is in place and kept up-to-date; the childminder has an accident book and policy in place in order to ensure that children are safe and their parents fully informed.

Children enjoy going on outings with the childminder who ensures their safety by having a first aid kit with her at all times and by carrying out risk assessments prior to allowing children to use any equipment; she has parental contact details with her at all times and has obtained all the required parental consents in order to ensure that they are kept fully informed. The childminder uses reins or wrist straps in order to ensure younger children's safety when they go out and about. The childminder has a written emergency procedure to be followed in case she becomes incapacitated whilst caring for children and a lost child policy in place in order to ensure children's safety. Children are very well protected from unvetted people as the childminder releases children only to their parents or people nominated by them. She has an uncollected child policy in place in order to support her practice and provides parents with written information of who can collect children in her care. The childminder operates a password system as an extra security system.

The childminder has an excellent understanding of child protection issues; she is fully aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect as well as the appropriate procedures to follow in case of child protection concerns which mean that children are kept safe in her care. The childminder has attended recent training in child protection and has a child protection policy in place which she shares with the parents in order to ensure that they are fully aware of her responsibilities towards the children. The childminder's excellent understanding of protecting children from harm and her extensive and thorough procedures both indoors and outdoors ensure that children's safety is exceptionally promoted in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very happy and very well settled in the childminder's home. They have access to an extensive range of toys and resources which help them learn through play. All toys and equipment are stored at child height which allows children to use their initiative and actively fosters their independence. The childminder uses ample praise and support which helps children develop positive self-esteem and confidence.

Children are provided with excellent play opportunities which help them develop their skills. For example, children explore texture as they use paint to make hand prints and develop hand and eye coordination and manipulative dexterity as they make collages using a wide variety of media. They learn how to use everyday objects in imaginative ways in order to create art such as making vegetable prints. They express their creativity by drawing colourful pictures using watercolours or by decorating ceramic money boxes using paint. Children develop their literacy skills and mathematical language as the childminder provides them with activities which help children to learn the letters of the alphabet and the numbers. She extends children's learning by offering them challenge such as encouraging them to make simple additions and subtractions. Children are encouraged to find out how things grow as they get involved in simple gardening activities; this helps children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world building on their natural curiosity as learners.

The childminder has an excellent understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and uses it extremely well in order to ensure positive outcomes for younger children. Observations and assessment records in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework are in place to ensure that their progress is effectively monitored. The childminder is very responsive to younger children's facial expressions and uses intonation in order to help them develop their emerging language skills. Younger children enjoy playing with a wide range of age-appropriate toys and resources with the childminder's support. They are encouraged to explore different sounds by knocking different toys together; the childminder is very supportive and encourages children to try out creating new ones. She helps children explore texture by offering them imaginative activities such as placing foam in a tray and covering it with cling film. The childminder actively helps children develop their understanding of self through excellent activities such as placing big play mirrors around them in order for the children to look at their reflections. As such, younger children's development is exceptionally well supported.

Children enjoy going on outings with the childminder and they are provided with a wide range of play opportunities which successfully promote their social and physical skills while having lots of fun. For example, children enjoy playing in the snow or riding their wheeled toys in the garden; regular visits to the local park and play groups ensure that children have ample opportunities to mix with other people from the local community and develop their awareness of the world beyond their home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are treated with respect which helps them feel good about themselves. The childminder's good understanding of equal opportunities and positive attitude towards diversity ensure that all children feel included in the setting. Children learn about the wider community through activities such as celebrating different festivals and having access to a wide range of multicultural resources which include books, puzzles and ethnic dolls. A poster saying "share the world - everybody matters" is displayed on the wall in order to further enhance children's understanding of equal opportunities. Boys and girls are provided with the same play materials which help children avoid gender stereotypes. The childminder has an equal opportunities policy in place in order to support her practice.

The childminder is aware that some children might have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and she is pro-active in ensuring that their needs are met. The childminder has a special needs and a disability policy in place where she states her commitment to make reasonable changes in order to be able to offer appropriate care. The childminder is willing to discuss any special care requirements with the parents and to attend further training, if needed. Children behave well due to the childminder's effective ways of promoting good behaviour such as using ample praise and encouragement. She uses age-appropriate techniques in managing challenging behaviour such as discussion and offering one to one support. The childminder has a behaviour management policy in place which is shared with the parents in order to support her practice. All required documentation such as an incident book is in place to ensure that parents are kept fully informed.

Parents are kept well informed as the childminder exchanges both verbal and written information with them on a daily basis. She has established a communication book for younger children in order to ensure that parents are kept fully informed about their children's day in the setting. The childminder ensures that parents receive good quality information and has a notice board where relevant information is displayed such as health and safety leaflets, as well as all the policies and procedures. Parents are requested to sign to say that they have read and understood them which ensure that parents are fully aware about the everyday running of the setting. However, the complaints procedure does not reflect recent changes in the regulations in order to ensure that parents have access to up-to-date information. Parents are aware of the contact details of the regulator should they wish to express any concerns as these are displayed, as required.

The childminder has contracts in place in order to form good working relationships with the parents and keeps complete child records in order to ensure that children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. This ensures that individual needs are met.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and benefit from a very well-maintained and homely environment which helps them feel secure and confident. The range and quality of activities both indoors and outdoors is outstanding and promotes children's learning exceptionally well.

All of the required documentation is in place to support the childminder, such as a medication, accident and incident book, and ensure children's health, safety and well-being. She has obtained most of the required parental consents in order to ensure that children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. The childminder has attended recent training and training courses in order to inform her practice and ensure that her knowledge remains up-to-date. The childminder is working towards accreditation and her knowledge of child development and how children learn is of an exceptionally high standard. The childminder has devised a wealth of policies and procedures which are available to parents at all times in order to ensure that they are fully informed about the setting.

The childminder is aware that any adults living or working in the premises need to be suitably vetted; she is very vigilant and ensures that unvetted people do not have unsupervised access to the children which promotes their safety. The childminder has a good understanding of confidentiality issues and ensures that existing files are stored safely in order to protect children and their parents' privacy.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

In the last inspection the childminder was asked to record existing injuries separately for each child. The childminder now keeps records of existing injuries separately for each child which means that children and their parents' privacy is respected.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- obtain parental consent to administer non-prescribed medication and to seek emergency treatment or advice

- update the complaints procedure in order to reflect recent changes in the regulations.

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