



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219766
Inspection date	17 November 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 1997. She lives with her husband and one teenage child in Dunstable, Bedfordshire. The childminder works with her daughter who is also a registered childminder. The living/dining room and kitchen/breakfast room are used for childminding and there is a ground floor room available for children to have undisturbed rest. Children have access to the fully enclosed garden for outdoor play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time and, when working with her daughter, is currently minding eight children under five during the day on a part-time basis. Journeys to school to take and collect children involve the use of a car. The childminder attends the local toddler group and a number of children's activity groups. The family has two cats as pets.

The childminder has achieved the National Childminding Association 'Quality First' award. She holds the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education 'Level Three Certificate in Childminding Practice'.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean home. Their dietary needs are clearly recorded and understood and they are offered nutritious snacks because the childminder has a good understanding of healthy eating. This area is further supported as the childminder is currently undertaking additional work in order to achieve the 'Healthy Eating' award, enabling her to ensure that children are offered a well-balanced range of foods and to offer advice to parents on subjects such as oral hygiene. Children are given clear explanations which promote their learning about the importance of personal hygiene, such as washing their hands before eating. Associated rhymes and songs further reinforce their understanding of this area. Children's independence in carrying out personal care tasks is generally promoted as they put on their own shoes and sometimes help with the preparation of snacks and drinks.

Children's health and development are very well promoted through their participation in a variety of stimulating physical activities. They are developing control of their bodies and a wide range of skills through regular opportunities for outdoor activities. These include visits to local parks where they use a range of static equipment, and playing in the garden with ride-on toys, bats and balls, the swing and trampoline. They also enjoy adult-led activities such as music and movement sessions and action rhymes. Visits to facilities such as the indoor activity centre offer further opportunities to explore and develop additional skills and physical movements. Regular access to resources such as puzzles and construction sets develops children's hand-eye co-ordination and finer physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is displayed and resources are easily accessible. Their safety is given a high priority and the childminder is aware of potential risks and has clear, practical procedures, for example, all smoke alarms are tested once a week to ensure that they are in good working order. Children are able to move around safely and independently because the majority of risks have been identified and removed. However, their safety is affected as they are able to access a hose pipe and fencing materials stacked in the garden and an unprotected electrical socket in the lounge.

Children are cared for using equipment which is safe and appropriate for their ages and developmental stages, for example, younger children use high chairs with appropriate safety restraints. They have access to a wide range of toys and play resources which are checked frequently by the childminder to ensure that they are clean and safe to use. Resources are well organised and are rotated regularly to ensure that children are always offered a good selection.

Children are developing their knowledge about keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by the childminder, enabling them to understand issues and make informed decisions. They are learning about road safety and regularly practise emergency evacuation procedures so that they are familiar with these. The children's welfare is well promoted as the childminder has a good knowledge of her responsibilities regarding child protection. She has put together a file of additional information to support this area and has ensured that she has all relevant information to enable her to identify, record and report any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very confident and thoroughly enjoy their time with the childminder. Their learning in all areas is consistently promoted and their achievements are high because the childminder is skilled, knowledgeable and creative in her work. She has a very clear understanding of relevant guidance such as the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, using this to inform her work.

Younger children's development is very well promoted because the childminder has a very good understanding of the 'Birth to three Matters' framework and has attended additional training in this area. She clearly recognises the holistic concept of development and learning and the importance of providing a wide range of activities and opportunities for children to explore and question.

New children settle quickly and become secure in their relationships with the childminder and other children. Meticulous attention is paid to ensuring that the childminder has all details relating to their individual needs and that these are reviewed and consistently met. Children are interested in the play resources and confident in their choice of activities and movement around the home. They become engrossed in activities, for example, a child thoroughly enjoys arranging the dolls and furniture in the doll's house, making up a story as she plays. They are given numerous stimulating opportunities and encouragement to develop their understanding and knowledge. Their natural curiosity is developed as they enjoy experiences such as exploring treasure baskets and 'story sacks'. These activities encourage children to use their initiative and to experiment, and they thrive in this environment where it is safe to try new experiences.

Children enjoy an extensive range of activities. These include outdoor play, music and movement sessions, cooking, gardening, reading and a creative range of crafts and construction activities. The childminder's careful planning and evaluation of these activities ensures that children are always offered a balanced range and that activities and play opportunities are always adapted to suit the needs and developmental stages of individual children. The implementation of long-term and short-term plans which are cross-referenced to the curriculum for the Foundation Stage ensures that all areas of learning are covered. The careful linking of monthly themes to children's daily play experiences means that children are able to look more closely at topics such as Harvest Festival, Autumn, Diwali and Christmas.

Children's learning is creatively reinforced through evaluation and good forward-planning with regard to the provision of play opportunities and resources. An example of this is the childminder noting that children of all ages enjoy using the play kitchen. She now uses this to develop their understanding in areas such as equality of opportunity, by providing resources to use alongside it, such as play food and utensils from around the world. Children's learning is further enhanced

because the childminder is skilled in using open questions and gentle prompts to extend their play and thinking. For example, a child exploring a box of toy animals is encouraged to name the animals, compare their sizes and to extend her vocabulary and imagination, discussing 'unicorns' and 'dragons' and where they might live.

Children's play experiences are enhanced because toys and resources are changed frequently during the day. This ensures that they are offered a wide range of opportunities and their interest is maintained. Their learning at school is reinforced by the childminder who takes time to ensure that she is aware of the current themes and topics being covered, providing activities and resources within her home to support these. For example, whilst covering a topic of 'Autumn' at school, children go with the childminder to collect autumn leaves, discussing the colours of these and using them to make a collage.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are valued as individuals and play an active part in the daily routines and activities. There is a clear recognition that all children reach developmental stages at different times and this is respected. The childminder takes time and care in getting to know each child so that she can provide appropriate resources and activities to enable them to thrive and reach their full potential at each stage. The diligent review of daily routines and planning ensures that these are suited to each child. Children are offered appropriate praise and support in their daily play and activities, promoting their self-image and self-esteem. They show pride in their achievements, for example, a child proudly points out her pictures and paintings displayed on the wall.

Children's behaviour is excellent. The childminder has high expectations of the children with regard to this area, creating a positive environment where good behaviour is reinforced. Children are exceptionally good at sharing and they demonstrate care and concern for each other, for example, a child gives another child a cuddle before going back to play. This area is further supported by clear ground rules which are shared with parents and children so that all are aware of the expectations. Although there are no children currently attending who have special needs, the childminder has previous experience of working in this area and has attended additional training to enable her to work with children who have specific needs. The ongoing adaptation of activity plans ensures that these are always adjusted to suit the needs of individual children. Children are given appropriate individual support whenever needed because the childminder works exceptionally well with her co-childminder to organise this.

Children are offered an extensive range of opportunities which promote their understanding of their community and diversity in society. The weekly timetable includes the regular use of local resources such as the toddler group, children's activity groups, parks, and the nearby zoo and farm. They have daily access to an extensive range of resources which provide positive images and information about wider society and other ways of life. These include books, dressing-up clothes, puzzles and play food and cooking utensils from other countries. This area is further promoted because the childminder has put together a range of information to support her planning and presentation of activities and give meaning to these, for example, using calendars and information about festivals to inform her activity planning.

The childminder has excellent relationships with parents, maintaining a professional, yet flexible and supportive approach. New parents meet with the childminder and are given a comprehensive 'Start-up Pack' containing information about all practicalities, policies and procedures, enabling them to feel fully informed and to work co-operatively in partnership with the childminder. Parents are kept exceptionally well informed about their children's progress and activities. The childminder uses daily diaries for each child and records feeds, sleep and activities. Parents are also able to access a wealth of information through the displays and notice boards in the entrance area. These contain useful information about a broad range of subjects including the daily timetable, current topics, healthy eating and local places of interest. There is a comprehensive complaints policy which contains all relevant details and is accessible to all. The childminder uses an easily accessible suggestions and comments book in order to obtain parents views, ideas and feedback. This positive approach ensures that work is regularly reviewed, parents views are valued and a high standard of care is provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their care is significantly enhanced by the exceptional quality of organisation and the childminder's meticulous attention to detail in all areas of work. Children are very confident within this secure, well-organised environment and can therefore initiate their own play and learning. Their overall development is very well promoted through the childminder's attention to detail in planning and organising all aspects of her daily work. This ensures that children are consistently offered a full range of stimulating activities and that these are adapted so that all are able to participate.

Children's individual needs are comfortably met due to the childminder's careful consideration and thoughtful organisation of the home environment. This is continuously reviewed and the accommodation has been organised so that the varying needs of children of all ages can be met and they can be offered an extensive range of activities and play opportunities. For example, the main play areas have been organised so that younger children can play safely with larger equipment and can safely practise skills such as crawling and walking, whilst older children can play in the other area with smaller toys such as construction sets and the doll's house. Children's needs are prioritised because the childminder organises her time exceptionally well. She ensures that she is able to meet all commitments with regard to collecting children on time, carefully co-ordinating this with her co-childminder to ensure that children are always offered a good range of activities and play opportunities at these times.

Careful attention to details in recording and reviewing paperwork and information ensures that children's welfare and learning opportunities are consistently promoted. All records are accessible but are also stored securely and confidentially, with a clear 'Confidentiality Policy' to further support this area. The childminder's consistent implementation of the comprehensive policies and procedures further enhances the care provided. Children benefit greatly from the childminder's positive attitude and her excellent commitment to attending further training, enabling her to continuously review and develop her practice and provide a high standard of care.

Improvements since the last inspection

At her last inspection, the childminder was asked to ensure that appropriate checks have been completed on all household members. These have now been completed and are clearly recorded, promoting children's welfare. She was also asked to look at two safety issues; the water butt now has a fixed lid and the kettle lead has been shortened, improving children's daily 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):

- improve children's safety by ensuring that they are not able to access hazardous items in the garden and the unprotected electrical socket in the living room.

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