

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220470
Inspection date	15 August 2007
Inspector	Sheila Dawn Flounders

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 1990. She lives with her husband and three children in Towcester, Northamptonshire. The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding. There is a fully enclosed garden for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of six children at any one time and is currently minding three children under five all day, and two children over five before and after school. The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children. The childminder attends the local parent toddler group.

She is a member of the National Childminding Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children usually have daily opportunities to go out in the fresh air and to get physical exercise because the childminder does not drive and they walk everywhere. Daily routines, such as going

to the shops or school, are extended to include a trip to the park on the way home where they have access to equipment which develops their large muscles. Within the home environment children are encouraged to spend time out in the garden and the younger children are provided with space to practise their crawling and standing skills before they learn to walk. Younger children are able to rest and sleep according to their need, either in the pushchair or on the settee, with the childminder finding out daily from parents when they are likely to become tired.

Children stay healthy due to the robust hygiene practices that are in place. They are provided with a choice of liquid or bar soap and fresh towels to wash their hands, with a step provided to encourage the younger children towards independence. Nappy changing takes place away from the food areas with the childminder ensuring that all supplies are to hand before she begins to limit the possibility of cross-infection. The premises and resources are very clean due to the childminder's evening routines. Parents are made aware that children should not attend with infectious illnesses, although common colds and coughs are accommodated. Medication can be given after completion of appropriate paperwork for permissions and suitable storage is available, with permission for emergency medical treatment now in place.

Children have their dietary needs met as currently parents send all their food to the childminder, so that she only has to prepare items such as baby food or reheat bottles and she has enough knowledge of food hygiene procedures to do so. Storage is available for perishables if necessary or parents are asked to include ice blocks in lunchboxes. She ensures that drinks are offered regularly so that children are sufficiently hydrated, particularly in the warmer weather. Whenever possible the children eat lunch together as a social activity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children remain on the ground floor of the premises, with the open layout enabling the childminder to supervise them in several areas at once. They are aware of where to put their belongings when they arrive and then able to access resources which the childminder has already set out for use, including in the garden. Young children sleep and have their nappies changed downstairs so that the childminder does not have to move far from the others to attend to them. Some hazards to the children have been identified and measures put in place by the childminder to minimise the risks, for example the under sink cupboard and the fire have been made inaccessible to the children. However, several unused low sockets are exposed which could compromise children's safety, particularly the younger children crawling around the floor. Children are cared for in a secure environment, with no access possible from outside the rear garden and systems in place to identify those people who are authorised to collect each child. Children have only minor accidents, which are treated appropriately due to the childminder's knowledge of first aid and recorded to be shared with parents, although their signatures have not been obtained on all the sheets which could compromise their health and safety.

Within the house and garden children only use equipment and resources which are suitable for their ages and stage of development, with the childminder ensuring that any items that become damaged are thrown out. On outings children quickly learn that they must hold onto the pushchair or someone's hands when walking and relevant road safety issues for the routes they normally take. They use hats and cream to protect themselves from the effects of the sun and take part in emergency evacuation drills several times a year to learn what to do in the event of a fire, although the childminder has all necessary equipment in place to limit this possibility. Children are further protected because the childminder is confident about her ability to safeguard

children and discusses with parents at initial contact what the implications might be if she has to report any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem because they spend time in mixed age groups at the setting and are able to see older children joining in activities and learn from watching them. Basic resources are set out before they arrive inside and in the garden often in connection with a theme, currently restaurants, so that children can get straight into the activities and then add to them following their own interest. For example, when the dough comes out to begin with they just roll it, then a decision is made to make 'cakes', so real cake cases and baking trays are used. Children are encouraged to develop their own ideas, for example, a recent use of the 'rainy day box' produced several hours of activity around 'cops and robbers' after the discovery of some police hats in there. They talk to each other as they play, with the older ones getting ideas for their creative work from the childminder's children or taking inspiration from the music which is played in the background.

Children have a close, positive relationship with the childminder, and younger members of her family, and parents report an increase in their social skills because of it. Also this interaction provides older children with challenge, for example, being shown how to make a mask and then doing their own. The younger children benefit from the warm rapport and show their contentment and enjoyment especially when being cuddled or sitting in a position so that they can see what the older children are doing at the table. They are provided with suitable activities for their age whilst the older children are engaged in activities they cannot join in, for example they play with soft toys whilst the others are using dough. At other times they instigate an activity, for example, playing the xylophone with a hammer, that the older children later come to join it with or they follow the older children around to see what they are doing, which the childminder allows as long as they are safe.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have their individual needs met because the childminder takes time to collect all the necessary information from parents before they attend, together with daily exchanges which keep her updated. Thus babies have their bottle, or sleep according to their own routines and older children are asked if they want drinks between meal times. Although none of the children currently attending have disabilities or learning difficulties the childminder has past experience of caring for those who do and adapting her practice to meet their specific needs. Within their everyday activities children all have opportunities to make choices and decisions, for example, about whether to join others for crafts, play alone, go out into the garden, and they know that the childminder will respect their choice and give them appropriate support if needed. The children all interact together, with the older ones being considerate of those younger and being mindful of their safety when they play together. The layout of the premises and resources within encourage the children towards independence which is promoted through the use of appropriate equipment.

All of the children are able to communicate their needs to the childminder, particularly the older children who are confident about asking when they want to do something else. Their varying attendance patterns, balanced with the routines of babies, ensure that they get periods

of individual attention. The babies have an especially close relationship with the childminder as she deals with their care needs, for example, being held whilst having a bottle. The older children accept that the needs of the youngest may be more urgent than their own. As children access activities within the local area they experience the wider community and resources are available within the setting to provide positive images of culture, gender and disability.

Children understand what reasonable behaviour is because the childminder has consistent boundaries in place. They know, for example, that they should be kind to each other, share toys and not run in the house or pull toys away from others. If they do they will expect to be removed from the situation and discuss what happened if they are old enough. Praise and encouragement are used to reinforce wanted behaviour. All incidents are discussed with parents to find a common approach if possible.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The childminder keeps a file of her paperwork to show to new parents and a separate file with all the confidential information on the children she currently cares for and has done in the past. The file she shows parents has details of her policies and procedures and information about issues she wants to ensure are discussed during visits. In the other file each child's individual contact information, enrolment forms, necessary permissions for activities, emergency medical treatment, contracts, medication sheets and accidents sheets are kept together. This enables the childminder to easily find any information she requires but parents can only access their own child's file. Changes have been made to paperwork over the years to find systems that suit the childminder and meet the requirements, however not all parental signatures have been obtained, for example on accident sheets.

The childminder makes good use of the space within her home to provide a child-centred environment where most resources are easily to hand, with a wide variety of toys and activities stored within the conservatory area. They use the family dining table for creative activities, the lounge for quiet activities or for the babies to play safely on the floor, and the conservatory area with the garden for imaginative play. She uses her time to provide a balance between routine activities such as school runs and free choice play within the home alongside extended periods out of the house on walks ensuring the children partake in physical activity. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At her last inspection the provider was asked to obtain permission from parents to seek medical treatment or advice in an emergency. There is now a request for a signature in the children's paperwork completed before they attend which all of the existing parents have also completed so that consent is maintained, which protects children's health.

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):

- ensure that accident records include a signature from parents to confirm they have been informed
- ensure that all unused sockets are inaccessible to children.

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