



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY219678
Inspection date	18 September 2006
Inspector	Gillian Charlesworth
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 September 2002 and is a qualified Nursery Nurse (NNEB). She is also a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA).

She lives with her husband and two teenage children in a house, in the Adeyfield area of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire close to local shops, schools and parks. The childminder has a car to transport children.

The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding with toilet facilities and space for undisturbed rest on the first floor. There is a fully enclosed garden for outside play that is always supervised.

The childminder is registered to care for five children at any one time and is currently minding two children under two years of age who attend on a part-time basis.

The childminder has no pets.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The daily routine allows babies, when settled, to have regular opportunities to go outside in the fresh air for activities in the garden or on local outings and walks. This contributes towards a healthy lifestyle. Babies are growing and developing well because they are encouraged to move around freely and practise their physical skills indoors, in safe surroundings. For example, they enjoy crawling between resources, pulling themselves up on the furniture, learning to use walkers and share delight with the childminder when they occasionally balance unaided. Babies have appropriate periods of rest and sleep according to their needs because the childminder ensures that their individual routines are met in line with home. Their signs of tiredness, such as thumb-sucking are recognised and acted upon.

Children have opportunities to become familiar with personal hygiene routines when their faces and hands are washed with clean flannels after each meal. Practical arrangements to ensure that children have appropriate first-aid treatment are generally in place. For example, the childminder has up to date knowledge of first-aid for babies and children and has purchased a basic first aid kit that is sometimes transferred to the car to use on outings. Children are suitably protected from the risks of cross-infection through the childminder's routines and procedures. For example, high-chair and nappy changing surfaces are wiped appropriately; parents are verbally informed of suitable exclusion procedures in the event of their children becoming unwell. Most documentation is in place to protect children's health such as National Childminding Association (NCMA) accident and medication records but some permissions have been overlooked.

Babies have drinks as part of the daily routine. Although information is not routinely provided for parents on helping children to make healthy choices, children have their individual health and dietary needs met because the childminder works with parents. For example, initially parents are asked to provide meals from home to help their babies settle, and provide them with familiar food they enjoy. The childminder routinely finds out about any special dietary needs or allergies and willingly ensures these are met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, comfortable and secure environment where they enjoy moving around freely. Children can easily access the well presented and organised resources that are particularly suitable for their ages and inspire them to make choices and use their senses. For example, babies enjoy looking at picture books with the childminder. They freely explore resources such as puzzles, blocks, shakers and interactive toys that are set out for them in different areas of the room to promote choice and movement. They have fun playing 'peep-boo' with the childminder using different sensory fabrics such as netting, silk and faux

fur. A delightful song bag is available for older children to help them link action rhymes to words and objects through prompt cards and props.

Children are able to practise what they can do in safe surroundings through the childminder's excellent supervision and ability to informally recognise and minimise risks for the ages of children attending. For example, safety gates are consistently used to prevent babies accessing unsuitable areas such as the kitchen, utility and hallway; as children explore the environment, the childminder positions herself close-by to scoop them up if necessary and thereby avoid harm. Hazards such as exposed drains, outdoor glass store and bathroom requisites are informally reassessed and made safe as children grow and develop or if new children attend. Written fire safety procedures have been devised and fire safety equipment checked periodically. Children are not completely protected in the event of a fire because the emergency escape plan is not practised.

Children's welfare is suitably safeguarded and protected because the childminder understands her role in child protection and has attended training in this specific area. She has devised a brief policy statement setting out her responsibility to report concerns. All the required guidance and support material is well organised and readily available for reference purposes.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies are very happy and are settling-in well to their new, calm environment. They enjoy the close and caring interaction with the childminder who supports them well. This develops the children's sense of trust and helps them to enjoy and achieve.

The daily routine is flexible and enables children's individual needs to be met. Babies are developing confidence and self-esteem through the childminder's intuitive responses. For example, they are encouraged by the childminder to play and explore, praised for their achievements as they connect blocks together, roll balls to and fro from the ball pond and explore puzzles, moving between the resources and choosing freely. They show delight making connections as they operate interactive musical toys, motivated by the childminder's warm responses. Bubbles are introduced to stimulate babies' curiosity. They use their senses to follow and catch the bubbles and watch excitedly in anticipation of the childminder blowing more bubbles when there are none left. During such activities they are free to make choices and when they are distracted by other toys they see, they can explore these at their own pace and return to the bubbles with the same enthusiasm. The childminder helps them to become skilful communicators and listen and respond to new words such as 'pop' and 'ready-steady...'. They enjoy finding a voice and babbling their conversations passionately to the childminder who tries to make sense of them. As she acknowledges and interprets their communication babies giggle in response. These repeated activities throughout the session encourage their impulse to communicate. Babies enjoy being together with the childminder and being physically close as they cuddle-up and look at picture books; the childminder helps them to turn pages as she describes pictures and acknowledges their words and excitement.

Children enjoy playful movement to background music and this is interpreted by the childminder as dance. She shares in their enjoyment and enthusiasm and encourages them to use their bodies and have fun.

A wide range of activities are offered inside and outside the minded home to help children become competent learners once they are settled. These include a variety of messy play activities, finger-rhymes, dancing and singing, balloon play, outings to the library and parent and toddler groups.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging. They are comfortable in their surroundings and enjoy snuggling in with the childminder and the open affection she shows. Their individual care routines such as sleeps and nappy changing are respected and made personal through the childminder's warm interaction; children bring familiar soft toys from home that are always available in the play or sleep area. The daily routine provides opportunities to help children learn about the local community through outings. Activities are being researched and developed to help older children appreciate the celebration of different festivals from around the world. The childminder is aware that some children may have a range of learning difficulties and / or disabilities. She has previous experience of identifying such needs in young children and is willing to research and work with parents to support individual children. Books are available to help children learn 'signing' and support their language and communication.

Babies benefit from the positive approach and role model of the childminder who has realistic expectations of them and helps them to play harmoniously. For example, as they are settling-in and excited about exploring and getting to know each other, they are encouraged to be gentle and introduced to collaborative games such as passing toys around. Occasional, firm "no" statements help babies begin to understand boundaries. Babies can pursue their interests through genuine choice of resources and activities in a safe environment and this minimises incidents when they may feel frustration and conflict. They are made to feel special and develop plenty of self assurance and confidence as they frequently giggle in response to the uninterrupted time and warm interaction devoted by the childminder. Their achievements are constantly praised and celebrated, for example, when they master new skills such as using a walker for the first time.

The childminder is developing friendly, professional relationships with new parents to ensure the continuity of children's care. As babies are settled-in gradually, aspects of their care are discussed and agreed. In addition, parents are invited to look at the childminder's port-folio containing a range of written information including brief policies and procedures. Time is set aside at the end of each day to share feedback with parents. This is complemented by daily written diaries that are very informative and are completed by both parents and childminder to support children's care.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the childminder's experience, training and commitment towards her role and her excellent knowledge of child development through her training as a qualified Nursery Nurse. She has also attended training in first aid, basic child protection, food hygiene and basic health and safety. She successfully completed the Hertfordshire Quality Standards accreditation scheme in 2004 to enhance her practice and experiences for children. The childminder is aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and broadly has regard to this; she recognises that to further influence the outcomes for children under three, a more active approach towards using the guidance materials is necessary. Steps are taken to ensure that all adults over the age of 16 years living in the household undergo suitable vetting. As a member of the National Childminding Association, the childminder uses their publications to update her knowledge informally and researches the internet for specific information to support children.

Children's needs are highly regarded by the childminder who prioritises her time with them so that they have plenty of attention and interaction. Their attendance is organised so that they are very well supported and can benefit from the high adult to child ratios. A diary and register book record's children's attendance patterns but these records are not consistently managed. In addition, not all written parental permissions are in place and, while responses to parental complaints are available, the required record keeping is not sufficiently understood to fully implement new regulations. This means that not all records support the safe management of children. However, documentation is well organised and readily available. This includes a port-folio; specific reference files such child protection information; historic children's records and NCMA toolkit record books. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that reasonable steps are taken to minimise hazards when children are sleeping; that there is a suitable first aid box that is always complete and a range of resources and play materials which reflect diversity.

Children are now fully protected when they are sleeping because the childminder uses a baby monitor effectively and complements this with regular personal checks. A suitable first-aid box has been purchased and is available containing a basic range of requisites to treat children in the event of an accident. Resources such as small world characters, books and music have been provided to help children appreciate diversity and will be more widely used as babies grow and develop. These are complemented by a multi-cultural cooking and activity book and research currently underway on festivals from other cultures.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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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):

- review fire safety arrangements and ensure that the emergency escape plan is regularly practised
- ensure that all the necessary records are understood, in place and consistently managed. For example, attendance register, written parental permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future and complaints log.

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