

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY264160
Inspection date	23 April 2007
Inspector	Suzette Butcher

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 outstanding. 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 2003. She lives with her husband and two children, aged four and one year, in Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port. The whole of the ground floor of the house is used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play.

The childminder is currently minding two children under five years and one child over five years on a regular basis. Children are taken to local toddler groups and on outings in the area. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and she has completed the NCMA Level 3 Quality First quality assurance award. The childminder also has a Level 3 National Vocational Qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for extremely well in an environment where a healthy lifestyle is actively promoted as an integral part of children's lives. Exemplary hygiene routines ensure that children are well protected from the risk of infection and cross-contamination. All areas are cleaned

thoroughly on a daily basis and children all have their own towels and face cloths, which are washed daily. Every child proudly remembers to remove their shoes as they enter the house. Children are encouraged to adopt good hygiene practices, such as washing their hands or cleaning them with antiseptic wipes at appropriate times of the day. The childminder talks to the children about germs, helping them to understand the underlying concepts of effective hygiene routines. Nappy changing routines are organised to meet children's individual needs and maintain privacy. The childminder creates a cosy and relaxing atmosphere when she sings a lively song to young children about their nappy changing process. Records relating to healthcare matters are maintained in excellent order. A sick child policy ensures that the best interests of the children are taken into account. The childminder quickly contacts parents if children are displaying unusual symptoms and agrees an appropriate course of action. The childminder is qualified in first aid and a first aid box is within easy reach, ensuring that any minor accidents or illnesses are treated promptly. Young children's needs with regard to rest and sleep are successfully met according to their individual needs. Familiar sleep routines are followed to comfort young children and they are checked frequently to ensure their safety.

Children enjoy an excellent range of physical activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They have fun playing energetic games in the garden or joining in parachute games at toddler groups as they make good progress in their physical development. They gain confidence as they learn to move with control and use their bodies in different ways when they carefully negotiate the climbing frame or try to hit a swing ball with a large plastic bat. In colder, wet weather, children eagerly decide to put on their wellies and coats to run around outside in the fresh air and consider how the rain has left puddles on the slide. Children are helped to understand how exercise helps them to stay healthy when the childminder chats about the benefits of keeping fit and active.

Healthy and nutritious meals and snack are consistently provided by the childminder. Sample menus are available for parents and special diets are accurately recorded and met according to parents' preferences and special dietary needs. Children learn about the benefits of healthy eating from practical experiences. For example, they help to plant and cultivate a wide selection of vegetables, such as carrots, lettuce and beans, in the childminder's garden and look forward to preparing and eating them. Food tasting sessions provide good opportunities for children to experiment with new tastes and textures. Fresh drinking water is always available for children and they are encouraged to drink on a regular basis to ensure that they are well hydrated. Young children confidently help themselves to their own water bottle and pour out their own drinks of milk or water when they are sitting at the table for snacks. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions where everyone sits together and enjoy each other's company. Good manners are promoted and young children have fun singing action songs whilst they wait for their friends to finish eating their snack. The childminder recognises the importance of developing children's independence and promoting all their self-help skills from an early age. For example, children are warmly praised and encouraged for putting on their own coat, helping to tidy away their dishes and given appropriate cutlery and crockery to meet their individual developmental needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children and their families are warmly welcomed in the childminder's very well organised home. Children's safety and security is given a very high priority throughout the day, with comprehensive policies and procedures in place to minimise risks. Children are well supervised and the childminder is extremely vigilant, with a strong awareness of potential hazards and dangers both inside and outside the home. She completes regular written risk assessments

before she takes children on outings and reviews her safety standards on a regular basis. Her home has been inspected and approved by the fire brigade and children participate in regular emergency evacuation practices, which are evaluated and recorded for future information. This helps children to learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe. They enjoy extending their knowledge and experiences in topic work, such as 'People who help us'. They enjoy looking at books about firemen or hospital workers. They stop and listen to a siren when playing outside and speculate about which emergency service it is. Younger children are gently reminded about the importance of safety rules in the home. For example, they remember that they must not throw things indoors in case someone is hurt and should only roll items along the floor. This develops into an exciting game where children demonstrate and practise rolling themselves around the room.

Children develop a strong sense of identity and belonging in the childminder's home. They move about freely and confidently between designated play areas where they are surrounded by colourful pictures, photographs and interesting toys. The indoor environment is very interesting and stimulating and invites children to engage in exciting opportunities. The outdoor environment is organised to create a natural extension to the indoor learning environment, with exciting opportunities, such as imaginative role play in the play house or exploring the properties of wet sand in the sand tray. The door to the garden is left open if the weather is suitable to allow children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment. Weekly outings to local toddler groups, singing sessions or the library provide alternative good quality play environments for children. This provides valuable opportunities for younger children to join larger groups as they learn to socialise with their peers, with discreet support from the childminder.

A very wide range of good quality resources are available to support children's learning and meet the needs of all the children who attend. They are made from a variety of different materials and natural resources. Items are cleaned and checked regularly to ensure that they are safe. Children are actively involved in recycling projects, such as collecting shiny paper or plastic bottles to use in treasure baskets or creating compost in the garden. Toys and resources are extremely well organised in labelled boxes, baskets and on low level shelving around the play areas. Consequently, children develop confidence and learn to make their own decisions as they happily choose their own games and link areas of learning. The childminder makes use of Sure Start resource centre and the toy library to extend the choice of play opportunities and maintain children's interest.

Children's welfare is safeguarded through excellent documentation and procedures, which are shared with parents. The childminder attends training as often as possible to increase her knowledge and understanding and ensure that she has up to date information and contact details. A comprehensive pack of information about the Local Safeguarding Children Board is available for reference.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children smile happily and giggle together with their friends as they look forward to exciting games and activities each day. They complete a pictorial time line of the day's activities and routines and refer to it during the day or if children are anxious about what is happening next. Young children gather together in a cosy circle each morning and sing their welcome song to each other. The childminder rolls a ball to each child to indicate that it is their turn to choose what they would like to play with. These activities help children to develop a strong sense of

identity and belonging in the childminder's home and encourage them to become active learners as they learn to make their own choices and decisions. The childminder has excellent knowledge and understanding of how children learn in different ways and she has very successfully implemented the 'Birth to three matters' framework in all areas of learning for younger children. Excellent principles of early years care and education underpin her current practice and create an exemplary foundation for young children's play and development. The childminder completes written observations on individual children's progress and uses these successfully to plan future activities. This enables her to build on and extend what children already know as she provides a positive and enjoyable learning experience. Regular evaluations are made to monitor the quality of daily activities and review children's individual progress. Consequently, children are highly motivated to learn, achieve successfully and make excellent progress in all areas of their development. An informative record of their progress is collated in a colourful portfolio to share with parents and carers. The childminder also shares relevant information with children's pre-school settings to provide continuity and consistency for children and create an effective partnership. For example, the childminder continues to explore and extend the pre-school's current topic, such as 'People who help us' or 'Under the sea', with minded children.

Children's language is enriched as the childminder is skilled in talking and listening to the children, responding to facial gestures and clearly repeating words and phrases to enhance language development. Makaton signing is used on an everyday basis as an integral part of language and communication systems. This provides children with strong visual cues and develops their confidence, memory and attention skills. Children's listening skills are encouraged and developed as they snuggle up on the childminder's knee to share a story or stop to listen to the different sounds outdoors. Rhyme and rhythm is regularly introduced and reinforced in lively action songs and imaginative sounds and descriptive words are explored when, for example, children 'swish' the water off the slide. Open ended questions encourage children to reflect and think about past experiences, such as seeing animals in the zoo.

Informal learning opportunities in everyday experiences are skilfully maximised to encourage children to link sounds to letters, count or recognise shapes and colours. For example, young children confidently ask for the red bat or consider the sounds letter shapes make as they play with magnetic letters on the fridge door. Mathematical and scientific language is used routinely as children play. Children count how many carriages their train is pulling around the track and experiment with light and dark as the train goes through a tunnel. They learn to make connections with other areas of learning when they consider if it is dark at night or in the daytime. Children learn about the wider world and their natural environment as they observe changes in the weather or watch the birds in the garden. They have fun digging in the soil as they plant seeds together and explore different sensory information in treasure baskets that are full of interesting objects and materials.

Inviting role play opportunities in a variety of situations allow children to develop their own ideas whilst they have fun. They enjoy making meals in the play house outdoors or taking their dolls for a walk around the playroom. They initiate their own imaginative games from an early age when they decide to climb into a large plastic container and pretend to drive away.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well behaved in a homely atmosphere where they are happy and relaxed. They enjoy themselves and are very interested and involved in all the opportunities that are available. The childminder always helps children to feel good about themselves and offers

enthusiastic praise and encouragement to promote positive behaviour. Consequently, children develop excellent self-confidence, motivation and self-esteem. Children relate very well to the childminder and to other children as they learn to respect and emulate the childminder's calm, firm, consistent approach. Young children develop an awareness of different emotions and learn to recognise other people's feelings. They clearly state that 'I need a cuddle' when they are feeling sad and regularly enjoy cosy group hugs with everyone. Children understand what is expected of them because there are a few simple rules with clear and realistic boundaries. These are based on safety for children rather than on convenience. Young children happily share, take turns and learn to play cooperatively with discreet support and excellent supervision from the childminder. For example, children wait patiently to take their turn to jump on the clearly defined 'green jumping spot'. This enables them to have fun and experiment in safety in a potentially chaotic activity.

Every child is very warmly welcomed and actively included by the childminder. They have excellent opportunities to learn about themselves and the wider world. Children have free access in everyday play activities to high quality resources that reflect a very wide range of positive images of society. They share vibrant stories about different religions and beliefs and investigate artefacts and clothing from different cultures. Children decorate their own placemats with pictures of children's faces from different cultures. They celebrate festivals from other countries together and have fun playing with pretend play food and resources in the play house. As a result, children develop an excellent and fully rounded awareness of ethnic diversity.

Children are valued as individuals and every child is actively involved in a fully inclusive environment. The childminder has attended relevant training to ensure that she has the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. She understands the importance of working closely with parents and relevant professionals to help individual children achieve their full potential. Children and the childminder attend weekly 'sign and sing' sessions where they practise and use Makaton sign language to enhance early language and communication. The childminder skilfully uses Makaton signing to supplement speech and language as an integral part of children's daily lives. This enables her to support a wider range of children.

There is an excellent partnership with parents and carers which is based on a good balance of honest, trusting, friendly and professional relationships. The childminder works very closely with parents to promote extremely good continuity of care for children. A comprehensive information file, with clearly explained policies and procedures, is readily available for parents. Clear and concise procedures are in place to record complaints, in line with changes to the National Standards. Parents are fully informed of their child's day through informal chats, a daily diary and regular reviews to discuss any possible changes to the children's care needs. A telephone call is made to promptly share important information. An attractive portfolio of photographs, children's work and general progress is collated for each child and linked to the 'Birth to three matters' framework for younger children. This is shared with parents on a regular basis. Parents' views are actively sought because their opinions are valued and acknowledged at all times. Parents comment that the 'excellent service' has 'exceeded their wishes' and they particularly appreciate the 'loving and stimulating' environment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The childminder is totally committed towards providing the highest quality childcare to support children. Her helpful leaflet for parents describes her setting as having 'smiley people, smiley

faces' which clearly identifies every child's happiness as her first priority. This is reflected in her relationship with children and evident in the extremely warm and friendly environment in the childminder's home where children beam with pleasure. The childminder has completed a Level 3 Quality First accredited quality assurance award which enhances her earlier Level 3 National Vocational Qualification in childcare. She continues to monitor and evaluate the quality of her childcare to clearly identify areas for improvement. She regularly attends training on subjects, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework, storytelling and behaviour management to increase and update her knowledge. She responds very positively to new initiatives, such as High/Scope, and absorbs the relevant details to complement her current excellent practice. The childminder is an active member of her local childminder's network where she supports network activities, shares information and good practice.

The childminder is exceptionally well organised. She maintains high quality, well organised records to share information with parents and safeguard children. Systems effectively link children's learning to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and provide a valuable record of young children's progress. Daily routines are successfully planned in advance with flexibility for changes in the weather and to meet the interests of individual children. A very effective weekly timetable ensures that everything runs smoothly as children are taken and collected from local pre-schools. The childminder makes excellent use of local facilities, such as toddler groups, libraries or parks and children enjoy regular outings to the zoo.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the childminder agreed to extend her knowledge and understanding to enable her to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities and difficulties. She has attended a number of appropriate courses to increase her knowledge and has subsequently adapted her practice to improve the quality of care she provides for every minded child.

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 outstanding. 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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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