



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY332441
Inspection date	11 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 April 2006 and is a member of the National Childminding Association (NCMA).

She lives with her husband and four children aged nine, eight, three and under two years. They live in a house in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire close to the town centre, local schools and parks.

The whole ground floor of the childminder's house is used for childminding where there are toilet facilities. Children can also use a first floor bedroom to play. There is

space on the first floor for undisturbed sleeps or on the ground floor if required. There is a fully enclosed garden for outside play including a raised wooden deck-style patio.

The childminder walks to local schools to take and collect children and also has a car to transport children. Her routine focuses on outings and she attends a local childminding group and a music group regularly with the children.

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

The childminder has a pet cat.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have regular opportunities to play in the fresh air and enjoy physical activity and this contributes towards a healthy lifestyle. For example, children can follow their interests and use the garden on demand where they practise throwing balls, using the rocker and swing and negotiating steps with support. They can select small indoor physically challenging resources such as 'sit and spin' to develop strength whilst having fun. They also take part in frequent local outings. Children sleep according to their needs in consultation with parent wishes.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene and are beginning to establish effective self-care routines because the childminder encourages them to wash their hands after nappy changing. Children use colour coded individual towels and requisites which helps protect them from risks of cross-infection. The childminder has devised and implemented a clear written 'illness, exclusions and accident' policy that parents are provided with and take heed of when their children are ill. Written information is provided for parents on health and care related issues such as head lice treatment and potty training and this supports children's wellbeing. Arrangements to ensure that children have appropriate first-aid treatment are in place and documentation to protect children's health is readily available and understood.

Beakers of water are always available in the play area for children to help themselves to. Children are provided with familiar food they enjoy because they all bring packed lunches from home which are refrigerated and re-heated as necessary. They tuck-in to healthy snacks such as apple chunks that are served in individual bowls and this ensures the children have healthy choices each day in the event of their packed lunches containing less healthy options.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a homely, secure and comfortable environment where they enjoy moving around freely and can follow their interests through the childminder's intuitive responses. For example, by providing outside play in the garden according to children's preferences. Children use different parts of the home to experience a range of toys and materials; resources are organised into containers and rotated to maintain children's interest. Children can ask for favourites by using the 'choose a toy' book and pointing to pictures but this is less suitable for younger children. Materials are not always available to encourage young children to pretend without adult intervention in line with guidance from the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This limits their opportunities to be imaginative. When children show interest in particular toys, such as puzzles and books, the childminder provides a wider range for them to choose from. She has introduced delightful story sacks which contain props to link with familiar stories such as 'the hungry caterpillar' and this sustains their enjoyment and interest.

Children are mostly kept safe from harm through the childminder's excellent supervision and the steps she has taken to minimise routine hazards in the home. However, risks are not always reviewed and re-assessed following changes to circumstances and, as a result of this oversight, children sometimes play in areas that have unsuitable fixtures at low level. For example, exposed carpet gripper and nails have not been made safe during re-decoration. Children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe because the childminder talks to them about potential dangers while they are playing. Fire safety procedures are well managed to fully protect children in the event of an emergency. This includes a written fire plan and recorded monthly practices to ensure that all children are included.

Children's welfare is suitably safeguarded and protected because the childminder understands her role in child protection and has recently attended training in this specific area. She has devised and is further developing written policies to support her practice. All the required guidance is readily available for reference purposes.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled and have high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy being together and have positive relationships with the childminder and other children.

Children are becoming skilful communicators. They have a strong impulse to communicate and have fun using and discovering language when they look at familiar photographs with the childminder. As they name other children and important people they see, the childminder skilfully interprets their labelling and repeats this to reinforce what is being said and value their conversation. Children enjoy playfully listening and responding to stories and are learning to handle books appropriately. They share puzzles together and through questioning and relaxed two-way conversation, children enjoy making connections in their learning as they find, match and talk about the pieces. As children learn and repeat new words such as 'tractor', they are praised and valued. The childminder talks to children about familiar

resources they enjoy and introduces these into free play to maintain their interest and involvement. Children eagerly look for the 'pop-it-in-the-post' game with the childminder and enjoy matching patterns and using the post-box. They make connections when the childminder involves the children in posting genuine letters on the way to school.

Children are becoming competent learners as they take part in a wide range of activities inside and outside the minded home. These include planting and growing, painting, exploring sand, water and large apparatus, making dens, feeding the ducks, canal walks and fruit picking. Sometimes, activities are planned to help children make connections and understand the world through related activities such as cooking the fruit they have picked.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have a strong sense of belonging. They are comfortable in their surroundings and happily play alongside others with the childminder who ensures they are all involved and interested in their chosen activities. Their individual routines such as nappy changing are made personal through the childminder's warm interaction. They delight in using an album of photographs to identify friends and activities they have previously enjoyed and revisit this with excitement. Children have many opportunities to learn about the local community through the childminder's focus on activities outside the minded home. For example, nature and canal walks and visits to childminder groups, parks or the toy library. The childminder provides books and small world characters to introduce children to diversity. To help children learn about other cultures, the childminder is researching and developing activities linked to festivals from around the world. A written policy statement has been devised setting out suitable arrangements to work with parents and professionals where a special need, learning difficulty or disability is identified.

Children behave very well and are constantly praised and valued. They are encouraged to share through routine activities such as passing puzzle pieces to each other, carefully guided and praised by the childminder. When children are occasionally frustrated and struggle to play harmoniously they are skilfully distracted and offered reassurance. This helps them to feel self-assured and resume purposeful play with enjoyment and without fuss. Children have some opportunities to begin to share responsibility for the organisation of the setting. As the childminder starts tidying away toys to make space for new activities, young children are gently guided to place toys in baskets.

The childminder is developing friendly, professional relationships with parents to ensure the continuity of children's care. Parents are provided with a pack containing a broad range of written information including policies and procedures. This is supported by daily verbal feedback that parents prefer to written diaries which the childminder is willing to provide if required. All aspects of children's care are discussed and agreed with parents. However, they do not yet receive comprehensive information to promote children's healthy eating or set-out arrangements when

working with other registered childminders. This would potentially enhance continuity and further promote children's healthy growth and development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's welfare and development is protected and safeguarded because the childminder is experienced and has a professional approach towards her role. For example, she has worked previously as a registered childminder and has recently attended training in first aid, child protection and submitted assignments for a pre-registration course. She has identified future training needs such as food hygiene and taken steps to sign-up to enhance her practice and benefit the children. The childminder is aware and has copies of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and the 'Birth to three matters' framework and broadly has regard to these. She recognises that to further influence the outcomes for children under three, a more active approach towards using the guidance materials is necessary. Vetting of all adults is in place and records kept to reassure parents. As a member of the National Childminding Association and the local childminding group, she also updates her knowledge informally and uses their publications and research from the internet for the safe management and development of children.

Children's attendance is organised so that they are well supported and can benefit from the high adult to child ratios during the day. Their needs are highly regarded by the childminder who prioritises her time with them so that they have plenty of attention and interaction. Activities are often planned in collaboration with another registered childminder and this provides broader experiences for children.

Documentation is conscientiously managed and readily available to support the safe management of children. A wide range of written policies, procedures and records are understood, well organised and shared with parents to promote children's development. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration. 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

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 imaginative resources and activities are readily available to help children's imaginative development in line with the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework
- ensure that there is a system in place to regularly assess risks and ensure that any identified hazards on the premises are inaccessible to children or made safe
- review policies and information available to parents to further promote healthy eating and set out arrangements in place when working with others

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