



Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123254
Inspection date	11 September 2006
Inspector	Hilary Preece
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 1992. She lives with her husband and two adult children in the London Road area of St Albans. The ground floor of the house is mainly used for childminding and there is a fully enclosed rear 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, and one child over five. The childminder takes and collects children to certain schools in the St Albans area. The family has Burmese cats.

The childminder is a member of the St Albans Childminding Network and is registered to provide nursery education for funded three and four year olds. However, at the time of the inspection there were no funded children on roll. She takes a lead role in a local childminding group and the network group. She holds the NVQ level 3 in Early Years Childcare and Education and the Hertfordshire Quality Standards award. She also works as a community childminder and provides support to new childminders.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's good health and well-being is actively promoted throughout their daily routines and activities. Children thrive on a healthy diet of freshly cooked meals. They relish snack time as they take a picnic of fresh fruit salad into the garden as part of a play activity, and eagerly devour a lamb and vegetable casserole for lunch and talk about the vegetables they are eating. Children drink chilled water throughout the day, ably pouring their own drinks whenever they are thirsty. Children remain healthy as they are encouraged to brush their teeth after eating. Babies are weaned on an extensive range of fruits and vegetables that broadens their tastes and promotes interest in healthy food from a young age. Children learn the importance of a good diet and learn to make healthy choices as they take part in many activities that promote their understanding of the origin of food, such as visits to the local farm shop and fishmongers.

Children thoroughly enjoy the extensive range of opportunities for them to be active. They independently access the garden to explore the climbing apparatus and benefit from being outside in the fresh air. Regular outings are planned that allow children to be active in the natural environment. Children are resourceful in deciding how to be active. For example, they choose to practice ballet to music, enthusiastically stretching their fingers and toes and gaining confidence in movement. Babies sleep whenever they need to, and older children are encouraged to rest quietly with a book after the exertion of a busy morning. Babies confidently become aware of their own movements as they crawl safely around and attempt to pull themselves up.

Children are protected from the risk of infection because the childminder is an excellent role model to the children on hygiene practice. Posters remind the children to wash their hands effectively with soap and they use individual towels to prevent the spread of infections. Older children responsibly remind younger ones to wash their hands after playing in the garden. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal care needs by helping themselves to tissues and disposing of them safely.

Children's health needs are supported by valuable and extensive documentation. A thorough sickness policy ensures infectious children do not attend, thus protecting others from the spread of infection. The childminder keeps useful information on common and notifiable childhood illnesses and ensures individual health and dietary needs are confidentially recorded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a safe and exceptionally well-equipped home. Thorough risk assessments are carried out to ensure areas that the children use remain safe and well-maintained. Children move around their play areas freely and they independently access the garden as considerable thought has been given to organising the environment with children's safety and enjoyment in mind. Children use a vast range of stimulating and inspiring resources, all of which are stored safely or displayed attractively and easily for children to access themselves. Resources meet the needs of children of all ages and all conform to safety standards.

Children take part in activities that gainfully promote their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand that in the event of a fire they are safer if they get down low and crawl to the nearest exit. This is reinforced through regularly practicing fire drills and following the childminder's written emergency evacuation plan. Children learn how to cross the road safely and understand they must act responsibly when getting out of the car. Again their understanding is reinforced by practicing this at home by using yellow safety jackets and a stop sign. Children understand the importance of keeping safe in the hot sun by wearing sun cream and hats.

Children remain safe on outings as thorough procedures are in place to protect them. Children wear matching sweatshirts so that they are easily identified when out together and the childminder ensures she always has access to first aid supplies and emergency contact details.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by highly effective child protection procedures. The childminder regularly updates her training in child protection, having recently completed an Advanced Child Protection session. She is rigorous in following procedures in line with Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and ensures that parents are fully informed about the child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children make significant progress in their learning and development because they take part in a diverse range of activities and experiences. Highly effective systems are in place to observe and record what children can do and these are used to plan the next steps in their learning. Plans are adapted according to the individual needs of children and in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework or the Foundation Stage curriculum for funded three and four-year-olds. Much of their learning is gained through practical and purposeful experiences that include regular visits to the local community. For example, children examine and talk about different produce on the market stalls, they see how sausages are made at the local meat farm and learn about the weather by experiencing the joys of splashing outside in the puddles. Children's learning is skilfully incorporated in their play. For example, children gain new skills and knowledge during an activity at the water tray as they focus on understanding the concept of floating and sinking and mathematical language such as 'more or less than' when pouring water into containers.

Children show great imagination in their play. They are thoroughly absorbed in self-chosen role play, using resources creatively to make a pretend castle on the climbing apparatus in the garden. Children negotiate extremely well in order to share their ideas and to take an equal part in the game. They confidently ask for support when needed, though mostly are exceptionally independent. Their independence is encouraged from a very early age through such routines as getting dressed, feeding themselves and laying the table. They make excellent relationships with one another and respond positively to all adults and visitors. They are extremely confident and display high levels of self-esteem, which is fostered through praise, respect and celebration of what children can do. Equally, children behave respectfully by being polite and helpful to others.

Babies and young children gain excellent communication skills and become competent learners. Babies use their senses to explore a variety of interesting objects and resources in treasure baskets to help them connect ideas and understand the world around them. Babies and young children experiment with mark-making using a variety of media such as chalks, finger paints and sand. They learn to explore their voices and engage in songs, rhymes and stories. They use stimulating and innovative resources, such as home-made story sacks containing appealing props that bring stories to life. Young children confidently recognise their own name as these are skilfully used in games and activities, such as playing 'snap' with laminated name cards so they become very familiar.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children make a very positive contribution to the setting. For example, children contribute their ideas to developing new resources, such as identifying suitable props to include in the story sacks. They also contribute to daily routines such as helping to lay the table for meal times using utensils that they can access safely themselves. Each child is equally valued and gains a strong sense of belonging to the setting through being given their own personal bag and slippers to bring each day. Children enjoy the familiarity of a special comforter from home to help them feel secure. Babies are actively encouraged to become aware of their own identity because the childminder provides safe play mirrors at low level so that they can explore what they look like and who they are.

Children behave extremely well as clear house rules are reinforced with the children and the behaviour management policy promotes positive behaviour. Children are spontaneously polite, helpful and caring. Children show developing respect for the needs of others by helping those younger than themselves with daily routines. They engage in animated conversations with the neighbour over the garden fence that helps develop their awareness of others. They have resourceful opportunities to learn about our diverse society, such as visiting an oriental centre where they eat noodles and sushi using chopsticks. They extend their learning through using fascinating multicultural displays and unusual resources in their play, including a wide range of dressing-up costumes, books in Arabic and Japanese bento lunch boxes.

Children benefit from a thoroughly professional partnership with parents and carers. They are kept extremely well-informed about policies, procedures and activities through regular discussion and a welcoming and prominently displayed parents' notice board. They have regular opportunities to share information about their children through records, observations and reports. For the younger children, delightful daily diaries and photographs are used to share their daily care and progress. Parents' views are sought and all highly value the service provided.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is significantly enhanced by exceptional organisation. All policies, procedures and records are unique to the setting and meticulously maintained. Observations and records are highly effective in promoting children's progress and development, and are shared with

parents, carers and other professionals. The childminder confidently follows the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum when planning and observing children in order to provide meaningful experiences for children across all age ranges.

The childminder is highly motivated, innovative and committed to her own professional development. She successfully evaluates and monitors her practice in order to identify training needs and areas for further development. She attends a vast amount of relevant workshops in order to refresh and expand her knowledge and skills, and this is effectively implemented to enhance all the outcomes for children. Children flourish because the childminder organises the environment and uses resources exceptionally well in order to provide very comfortable facilities and stimulating play and learning experiences for them.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended the childminder ensure that potential hazards, such as the garden fence, are made safe or inaccessible to children, and that the complaints procedure be reviewed to include Ofsted's contact details. These issues have been successfully addressed. Children play safely in the garden as the boundary is now fully secure and the complaints procedure has been reviewed and meets regulations.

Complaints since the last inspection

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. There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1st April 2004.

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

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