

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 401024
Inspection date 16 August 2007
Inspector Elizabeth Patricia Edmond

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 has been registered since 1996. She lives with her husband and two children aged nine and 12 years. They live in a semi-detached house within walking distance of the hospital and beach. Mainly the ground floor of the house is used for childminding; toilet facilities are located on the first floor and some bedrooms can be used for care where appropriate. There is a fully enclosed garden to the rear of the property for outside play. Children are taken to and from local schools and nurseries on foot. There are also regular visits to local toddler groups with the younger children.

There are currently five children aged under eight years on roll; they attend various full and part time sessions. Older children are also cared for. The childminder occasionally works with her mother who is registered to assist with the children. On these occasions the childminder may care for additional children. The childminder is a member of the National Childminding Association and a local childminding group. The family has a cat.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in warm, clean premises. They develop a high level of independence in relation to their personal hygiene. The older children automatically wash their hands before lunch and the younger children hold their chins up as they learn to wipe their own faces. The childminder has excellent knowledge and experience of childhood diseases and conditions which means that she is able to advise parents and other childminders. This results in a high level of care for the children.

Children develop a positive approach to being active in the outdoors throughout the year. They have great fun digging on the beach in the summer or sledging when there is snow. Similarly, easy access to the garden promotes a healthy, active lifestyle. The younger children enjoy learning to climb down the carpeted step to access the small outdoor area directly adjacent to the playroom. The area further down the garden offers older children space to relax or engage in physical play.

The childminder plans interesting craft and cooking activities which benefit the children's health because they learn to appreciate healthy food. Although parents provide some lunches, they learn about the importance of having fresh fruit and vegetables and they become accustomed to different vegetables as they add them to their pizza toppings. The children have free access to drinks and the childminder encourages the younger children to drink regularly to ensure they do not become dehydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children can play freely and safely in the homely childminding accommodation. This is due to the childminder's very professional approach to identifying and minimising risk to the children. Importantly, she understands how older children need to learn to keep themselves safe in relation to their ages and their developing need for independence. For example, the childminder sensibly uses barriers to keep the youngest children safe on the beach, yet allows older children a little more freedom as she gets to know them and becomes more trusting of their behaviours. This approach means that they are kept safe without their play and learning being inhibited.

The children choose freely from a very broad range of play equipment indoors and outdoors, which is in good, safe condition. They also use the childminder's good quality domestic furniture freely for their rest and play. The children are protected and their well-being safeguarded. This is because the childminder keeps her child protection training updated and she files all local and national information carefully for advice should she need it. There is a clear child protection policy in place which is shared with parents at the outset of the care arrangements.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are relaxed and happy in the childminder's care and they enjoy their time with her and her family. The younger children snuggle in for a cuddle with the childminder as they wake and they become excited when her son initiates a favourite game with them. There is a warm, busy family environment which means that children feel able to make themselves at home.

The older children help themselves freely from a broad range of play equipment and resources from the well stocked playroom and they call confidently from the dining room if they cannot find specific items for their art and craft work. The stimulating environment encourages the younger children to rummage in the low-level storage boxes with interest until they have found their favourite toy. The childminder has attended training on how treasure basket play can enhance young children's physical and intellectual development and has some related items for the young children to play with. However, these items are not easily available to the babies in the playroom.

The children develop their communication skills to a good level. This is because the childminder engages the youngest children in rhymes and the babies smile broadly when they are praised for attempting to join in. The older children also delight in the babies' early communications, which further encourages the babies' babbling and cooing. The childminder helps older children with their spellings or other homework, and regular visits to the library further encourage all the children's interest. There is a good range of equipment which helps the children to enjoy their developing mathematical understanding, such as jigsaws and board games. Importantly, the childminder understands how talking to the children about shapes, colours and numbers when they are out and about aids this aspect of their development. Some children learn to look out for the correct bus number as they wait for the bus home or to the park.

The children benefit from the range of outings, particularly in the school holidays. The children learn about the world around them from the regular outing throughout the year to the park, the beach or up the old railway line into the countryside. The weekly trips to the supermarket are also beneficial in this respect. The children enjoy looking at photographs of themselves playing out in the snow or digging on the beach; they talk fondly about the pictures of their friends and about the children who no longer attend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. This is because the childminder gets to know them very well through a high level of liaison with parents both in written and verbal form and through careful observations of the children as they play. She talks very confidently about the children's individual medical or dietary needs and the babies' development. This, coupled with the cheerful and professional methods for managing children's behaviour, means that the children are relaxed, confident and behave very well. Clear guidance about behaviour offered by the childminder also promotes the older children's safety; they understand and follow the rules for walking on ahead when they are out and about. There is a good range of resources and activities which help the children to accept and enjoy life in a diverse community.

Relationships with parents are friendly and very professional. All necessary registration information is clearly displayed, a range of written policies inform parents about all aspects of the care, and all contractual agreements are comprehensive and adhered to. Parents respond very favourably to the regular surveys about the service provided. This means that any matters can be addressed in a friendly yet professional way. The parents express their support for the childminder. They mention the relaxed happy atmosphere and the range of activities and outings as being very good.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The children benefit enormously from the breadth of the childminder's experience and training. She is proactive in updating important training such as first aid and child protection and she begins to look at new information in early preparation for changes to relevant legislation. Strong links with the local childminding group and Sure Start further enhance all aspects of the children's care and development. For example, joint outings with other childminders means that the children confidently develop social skills with a wider circle of peers, they take part in an additional range of outings and activities and they develop trusting relationships with other childminders with whom the childminder has emergency cover arrangements. The effective use of the childminder's mother as an assistant provides the children with a high level of continuity and an increased feeling of security.

Very well-organised routines help children to feel secure. For example, they follow routines for lunch and walking to school confidently which promotes their safety and their behaviour. The children are exceptionally confident in the effectively organised childminding environment. They help themselves freely from the equipment and all children can go in and out freely due to the effective arrangement of the indoor and outdoor areas.

All aspects of the childminder's documentation are exceptionally well organised. Written information for parents is clear, comprehensive and attractively presented. Records, for example, of attendance and medication or the children's play and care are very clear, signed by parents where appropriate and vigilantly updated throughout the day. Similarly, a range of advice, guidance and training materials on all aspects of childcare and development is effectively organised and stored should she or parents need help with issues, such as behaviour management, child health, or how children learn. 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 one recommendation was raised in relation to the ongoing work in the back garden. This is now complete and the garden provides some very good quality opportunities for free play.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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

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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):

- make the treasure basket items more easily accessible to the younger 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