



Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** 123246  
**Inspection date** 05 October 2005  
**Inspector** Siobhan O'Callaghan

**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](http://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 1993. She lives with her husband and their two adult children, along with their youngest child who is 11 years old. The family live in St Albans, Hertfordshire. All areas of the property are utilised for childminding purposes, however children mainly access the ground floor accommodation. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play.

The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of three children at any one time and is currently minding one child aged two and a half years on a full-time basis, along with two other children aged two and a half and one and a half on a part-time

basis. The childminder attends the local toddler group with the minded children. The family have a selection of small caged pets which include a rat and two gerbils, these are kept in her children's bedrooms. There are also two rabbits who live in the garden.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to develop their all round physical skills and thus develop a healthy attitude towards exercise. Children enjoy walking to the local shops on a daily basis. They attend a baby bounce group once a week, where they can practise their jumping and balancing skills using a variety of challenging equipment. Children have good access to a broad range of resources to promote physical activity, including a swing in the garden, wheeled resources and a large crawl-through tunnel. The children are excited to show me photographs of themselves during the summer, where they had fun playing in the paddling pool.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through their daily routines. They wash their hands before eating lunch and after using the bathroom. The childminder ensures good hygiene practices are promoted around the care of the family pets. Children know that they must wash their hands after handling or feeding the animals. Positive procedures are implemented to help protect the children from infection. They have their own separate cots and sheets, where they have a sleep each day.

Children's dietary needs are on the whole met by their parents, however the childminder offers the children healthy snacks such as breadsticks and fruit to compliment their main meal. Children are encouraged to help care for the vegetables and fruit in the garden, the older child is very keen to pick the tomatoes, however she is informed that these are not yet ripe. Children eat well at lunch time, the older child sits at her own small table where she independently feeds herself. The younger child sits in a highchair, where she too makes a good job of feeding herself. The childminder offers the children lots of encouragement and praise to eat their food, and then presents them with a treat once they have finished.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure home where risks are identified and addressed appropriately. The childminder has instigated many safety precautions in the home such as stairgates and socket covers to protect children from harm. However, the fire blanket in the kitchen is yet to be sited appropriately. Children learn about keeping themselves safe, they climb up and down the stairs with due care. They listen and respond quickly when the childminder informs them that wearing a box over their head could make them trip. The childminder discusses how certain plants can be dangerous, and that they must not touch or eat berries when

playing outside. On outings the children learn how to keep safe and cross the roads with care. The childminder teaches them about the green man and the importance of the traffic light colours, and what they mean.

Children fully access their environment, they move around freely and confidently utilise the stimulating range of safe and appropriate resources available to them. The childminder rotates these regularly to ensure the children are presented with a variety of choices. Children are excited to show me the room where the toys are all stored, they confidently request further resources to bring into the main lounge.

The childminder is committed to the well-being and safeguarding of children, she has attended child protection training and keeps her first aid up to date. She has a good understanding of the necessary procedures to follow should she have any concerns regarding children within her care. A child protection policy with appropriate contact details is in place and is made available to parents.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and secure within their environment. They confidently show me around the home and where they go to sleep. Children are excited to show me the family pets, they inform me of their names and what they like to eat. They thoroughly enjoy stories, children sit cuddled up on the sofa with the childminder. Both children are keen to choose more books to read. They enjoy taking responsibility for lifting the flaps on the book and predicting what might happen next. The childminder encourages the children to talk about the books and which parts are their favourite. Children delight in the challenge of puzzles, the youngest child completes her first puzzle unaided, and is delighted with the praise and claps she receives from both the childminder and the other minded child. Thus children's self-esteem is fully promoted.

Children's all round development is promoted through a broad range of activities and experiences. Children play purposefully both with the childminder and each other. They enjoy emptying the toy boxes and climbing in them to see if they will fit. The childminder is close at hand to talk about the sizes of the boxes and which might be the biggest. The older child is keen to respond to questions, and informs the childminder that she will take the biggest box as she is the largest. The childminder further encourages the children to look at the different colours of the boxes and which might be their favourite colour. The children thrive on this interaction, and are delighted when they receive appropriate praise. The childminder sensitively corrects the children when they respond with wrong answers.

Children have a secure and comfortable relationship with the childminder. They approach her for support and general interaction. When the oldest child hurts her finger on a toy, she quickly informs the childminder, who then responds with a reassuring cuddle and a kiss for the hurt finger. Children learn to work co-operatively, they share resources and books. The childminder is close at hand to reinforce sharing and being kind, she ensures that both children receive equal amounts of her attention. Thus children are well-behaved. Children benefit from the childminder's clear understanding of how they learn. She spends all her time with the children at

their level. Children's self-initiated play is fully encouraged and sensitively extended, thus they are supported to achieve to their full potential.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children's care is enhanced through the close working partnership with their parents. Their individual needs are discussed and met appropriately. Children's daily routines and any significant achievements are shared with parents verbally, or through the maintenance of a daily diary. A comprehensive port-folio with a full complement of policies and procedures is available to parents and thus keeps them informed of the childminding practices in place. Children feel a sense of belonging within this home, they are fully encouraged to be independent. Children are confident to request a drink when they are thirsty, or to ask for support to use the bathroom. They have their own bedrooms where their individual cots are placed, offering them undisturbed sleep during the day. Children are delighted to show me photographs of themselves, they excitedly explain what they were doing, and who all the other children are.

Children become aware of wider society, through the childminder's good range of multi-cultural resources. She supports children's understanding of others through stories and discussions. Recently the oldest minded child was very curious as to what a wheelchair was and why was a grown up using this. This was followed through with appropriate discussion to raise children's awareness of those with disabilities. Hence children learn to respect others and realise we all have different needs and abilities. This is evident when the older child stops climbing on the box, when she realises the younger child is copying her and could get hurt.

Children understand reasonable behaviour, which is effectively promoted through the childminder's calm and consistent manner. The older child is sensitive to the younger child's needs, she praises her when she achieves a puzzle and willingly shares resources with her. When the children both hand the childminder a book they want to be read, she quickly replaces this with a book that she knows they will both like.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The childminder is fully committed to updating her skills and improving provision for children. She completed her Open University Degree in Early Years Practice in December 2004, and continues to update her skills through short courses provided by Young in Herts. The childminder is a member of the St Albans childminder's network, they meet regularly with the National Childminding Association (NCMA) to discuss all aspects of good practice and providing quality provision for children. Thorough policies and procedures are in place to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Children are well protected through appropriate vetting procedures.

Children benefit from secure routines, they have lots of time to play both

independently and with the childminder. They eat and rest in a comfortable setting where their individual needs are catered for. Children access all areas of their environment with growing confidence. Good use of the local community extends children's experiences further, today they are off to the local library to exchange their books. They attend nearby toddler groups and visit parks in the area. The childminder has a high regard for the well-being of all the children she cares for. Children have equal access to resources, their environment and the childminder's time, this is evident through her practice and her positive equal opportunities policy. Consequently the provision meets the needs of all the children who attend.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the previous inspection, the childminder has implemented a system to record incidents or concerns regarding children. Although she has had no serious concerns to follow through, this record is well managed and informative. The childminder was also requested to make available to parents a complaints procedure with contact details of the regulator. This is readily available in the childminder's portfolio which is shared with parents. However, she has also photocopied this information and given this to each parent individually. Lastly the childminder was to ensure that poisonous plants in the garden are made safe or inaccessible to children. The childminder has done a lot of research into the plants and has sought advice from the garden centre and other professional agencies. She has implemented a risk assessment to ensure children learn about the dangers of all plants and why they must not touch or attempt to eat these. The children are also never left unsupervised in the garden.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There are no complaints to report.

## **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.
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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):

- ensure a fire blanket is sited appropriately in the kitchen.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)