

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CHILDMINDER BY JENNI FITTON

7am – My day begins as I pack lunches for my own children and prepare the vegetables for tea.

7.30am - The first knock on the door of the day. A school age child greets me, removes his shoes and waves a hurried goodbye to Dad as he dashes in to see what he can play with.

7.50am - The next two children arrive, they say goodbye to Mum and go to find their friend inside.

8.30am - Another knock at the door. A big smile from the baby, and Mum goes happily to work. Over the next 20 minutes five more children arrive creating a mountain of coats, shoes and school bags. Various activities are now happening in the living room, from colouring to cars to watching television.

8.35am - The double buggy is put up while everyone finds their coats, shoes and the right lunch boxes. All strapped in and coats fastened we walk to school. The walk to school is full of chatter as the children talk about the day ahead. We have rules about walking safely and stopping points in case anyone gets ahead.

8.50am - The older children shout “Goodbye” as they run off to their classrooms, the Reception children wave happily as I leave them at their classroom door, with their teacher.

9.00am - I arrive home with just three small children, the house is much quieter now.

9.10am - Time for a story in the storycorner, the older two choose a storycushion and the baby sits on my knee as I read. They choose books from the basket as I finish each one.

9.30am - There is a choice of boxes for the children to pick from, today it is puppets and stacking toys. As a puppet is chosen we sing a song and the toddlers and baby join in. Everyone has a turn choosing and operating the puppets, including the baby who wears it more like a glove. The children then continue their play alone as I go to prepare a snack.

10.15am - Snacktime. Hands washed and everyone is sat down and ready for a snack.

10.30am - Snack is eaten, and cleared away and it is back to the toys. We build towers, counting as we play.

11.45am - The children continue their play alone as I go to prepare lunch. This takes time as I watch them play as I work.

12noon - It is time to tidy up. We have lots of fun finding the right toys for the boxes.

12.10pm - Time to wash our hands and sit down at the table, for lunch.



Lunchtime - A lot of chatter over lunch, so many learning opportunities.

1pm - Naptime. We find favourite toys and blankets and everyone settles down for a sleep, tired after a busy morning. While they rest I can tidy up the lunch mess and sort out the activity for when they wake.

2pm - All awake and enjoying craft time. Lots of glue and crayons are needed to make a picture to make Mummy smile.

2.30pm - Storytime again, everyone picks a book, all very different and we gather round to listen. A good activity to wind down ready for the school run.

3pm - Into the double buggy again, ready for the walk to school.

3.15pm - School ends and children come out of their classrooms, four from KS1 and two from KS2. Another, who goes to Secondary School meets us in the playground, greeting her younger sisters first.

3.30pm - When we arrive home my oldest son has already arrived home from Secondary School.

3.40pm - Snacktime, after a long day at school everyone is ready for a drink and fruit, cheese and crackers.

3.45pm - Craft time and the children gather round the table to see what activities are on offer. The theme this week is Pirates so treasure boxes are being created from junk.

4pm - Everyone is busy, time to put tea on, set the table and ensure that there are enough chairs to sit on.

4.30pm - The craft is completed and all look great. Everyone puts on their shoes and coats to go outside and look for treasure (lost by the pirates...), hidden in the garden. The older children kindly help the little ones.

4.45pm - Everyone is back inside and hands are washed ready for tea. Time for one toddler to go home, Dad is at the door.

5.10pm - Everyone has finished tea and, after asking politely, are excused from the table. The television is on and all is quiet. Jigsaws and books are out to play with.

5.30pm - Parents are arriving to collect their children. Shoes, coats and school bags are found and activities proudly presented. There are lots of waves and shouts of goodbye.

6.00pm - The last children have left, time to tidy up.

Now it is time to sit down and have a cup of tea before helping my own children with homework, music or just playing a game.

