

Childrens Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY316826
Inspection date	12 March 2008
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Children's Montessori Nursery opened in 1995. It operates from a dedicated building in the village of Gamlingay on the border of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday, from 09:00 to 15:00. There is also an after school club one evening each week from 16:00 to 17:15 for children of school age and a holiday club operates each weekday from 08:00 to 15:00 during school holidays with the exception of Christmas. Children have access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 33 children aged from two to eight years on roll, of these, 25 receive funding for early education. Children come from the local, surrounding and wider areas. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's continued good health is promoted because the staff follow effective routines for maintaining a healthy environment. For example, tables are cleaned before children sit down to eat, the bins are emptied during the day, the toilet areas are clean and fresh and the toys and equipment are well maintained. Children who have accidents are managed sensitively and appropriately because all the staff hold current first aid certificates. Accidents and medication administered is recorded appropriately and signed by parents. A first aid kit is accessible in the main room. However, some items have passed their expiry date which has a potential impact on children if these items were to be used. Children's individual health and dietary requirements are recorded and managed effectively by the staff. Active steps are taken to minimise the risk of cross-infection. For example, staff wear gloves if they are required to change children and they talk to them at lunchtimes about the importance of not swapping or sharing food from their lunch boxes. Children are learning about the benefits of maintaining good personal hygiene because the staff talk to them about germs as part of the daily routine.

Children enjoy a variety of snacks provided at the nursery, these include healthy choices, such as fruit, vegetables and toast. They enjoy taking part in cooking activities which involve them preparing food for the day's snack. Parents provide a packed lunch for those children who stay for a longer session. The staff request that no nut products are included and all food is stored in the fridge before being set out on plates by the staff in readiness for children to sit down to eat. Meal times are social occasions when children are encouraged to talk amongst themselves. They begin to learn about healthy choices through the good example shown by the staff who eat their lunches at the same time and talk to them about making healthy choices for food. Children do not become thirsty because they have drinks at meal times and can help themselves to water from a jug that is available throughout the session.

Children's physical skills are developing well. They enjoy using the nursery garden which has lots of equipment to promote hand and eye co-ordination, climbing, balancing and pedalling. The staff are imaginative and creative in the outside area and provide children with a range of experiences. For example, they can touch the wind chimes, plant vegetables and plants and watch cars or balls roll down a series of drain pipes. These activities contribute to children being curious and exploring their environment. Inside, children participate in plenty of activities that promote fine skills, such as manipulation of construction materials, screwing nuts and bolts together, doing up buttons, sewing, transferring items from one container to another using tongs and tweezers as well as scissors, play dough tools and writing implements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is given the highest priority by the staff who are vigilant in their supervision. The setting works to a high adult to child ratio which contributes to children's safety, and the available space is very well organised to allow children to move around between their activities safely. Access to the setting is carefully monitored by the staff who greet all parents and visitors, and visitors are asked for identification and to sign in. The main door has a latch at adult height and everyone arriving at the premises can be seen through the large picture windows. Children are prevented from having access to the kitchen because a gate is in place. Children have access to an adjacent room that is well stocked with imaginative play materials, books and child sized

exercise equipment including a treadmill, exercise bike and a ski trainer. Staff supervise this equipment and talk to the children about how to use the items safely. The outside play space is fully enclosed and a fire exit gate ensures safe exit in case of emergencies. Children are learning about protecting themselves. They take part in regular emergency evacuation drills and the staff encourage them to tidy away when they have finished with their activity. Some children do this spontaneously. For example, a child working on a puzzle does not notice some pieces when they fall on the floor, another child walks past the table and picks them up for their friend to enable them to complete the puzzle. Children are learning to care for equipment and to maintain a safe environment for everyone. Concise risk assessments are in place and health and safety issues are managed promptly. Children enjoy accessing the abundance of play materials and activities that are safe, suitable and cover all areas of development. The items include an impressive range of Montessori equipment that is very well maintained. Children are actively encouraged to select their own activities in accordance with the Montessori ethos and manage this extremely well because the activities are stored on low-level units that the children can easily access. The provider is creative and innovative in sourcing ideas and resources for the children which contributes to the wide range of experiences available to them.

Children's welfare is well safeguarded because the staff understand their responsibility to record and report all child protection concerns. They are aware of and follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines and ensure they report any issues to the correct authority bearing in mind their location on the border of two counties. All staff understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality when managing such issues.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children clearly enjoy their time at the nursery and attend to their activities with relish. They are confident to move around and to seek support and reassurance from the staff as they need it. Children enjoy the highly positive and encouraging interaction from the staff who sit with them to present the activities and support them until they can practise themselves. Children play well together and work co-operatively with large wooden bricks to create roads, towers and houses. They enjoy using the adjacent room and take part in detailed role play games using dressing up clothes and other props. The staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are mindful of this when planning for and assessing the progress of younger children. The staff have a great understanding of the Montessori methods of teaching including demonstration and quiet support which the children greatly benefit from. Children enjoy books and spontaneously use this area within their play. For example, they 'read' stories to dolls during an imaginative game and sit together with a member of staff in this area who willingly reads stories to them.

Nursery Education

Children are motivated and keen to learn because they are able to select their own activities from a great selection that is correctly pitched to provide appropriate challenge. They are able to concentrate and see the piece of work through to its conclusion. The staff are skilled in encouraging children to take the activity further if they wish and are always ready to suggest another activity. Children's confidence and self-esteem is actively and effectively promoted because they receive lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements. The staff make time to appreciate what children are doing and show positive facial expressions as well as giving verbal praise. Children are visibly proud when they complete their work. Close relationships are in place between the staff and the children. They ask questions and show

curiosity about artefacts and new experiences. Positive relationships are building between children, they work together and discuss roles during games. They enjoy being part of small groups. For example, a group of children wear eye masks or goggles on their foreheads during their games to denote they are part of their particular game. Children are able to be independent throughout their session at the nursery, they select all their activities including art and craft materials, spread toppings on their toast and select pieces of work for their achievement books and paste them in themselves. The Montessori equipment contributes to the development of independence skills. For example, a child uses a frame to try and tie a bow, they try hard and succeed with support and explanation from the member of staff. The learning is extended because the staff member proceeds to show her shoelace to give a different perspective on tying a lace.

Children are confident speakers. They ask lots of questions and show curiosity. They enjoy joining in with rhymes and songs and familiar parts of stories. They discuss their ideas during their work and respond to questions from the staff that encourage them to think about what they are doing. Children freely recall events from their own experiences both during large and small group activities. Children are becoming aware of text and learn letter sounds phonetically. They are given groups of letters and use various methods to learn the sounds and how to form the letter shapes. For example, they make the letter shape in shallow sand trays with their fingers, they feel the shapes on sandpaper letters and they make their own raised letters using glue and craft sand. This attention to detail ensures that children become secure with the letters in a manageable and fun way. Children have opportunities to recognise their names when they arrive and have access to lots of labels and text displayed around the room. Children are developing a good awareness of numbers because the staff ensure that plenty of activities and discussion includes mathematical language. They count items during their work and in free play and count each other. During group time they state how old they are and match their age to a number display. Children are able to complete simple addition and subtraction problems and use the Montessori equipment to enhance their awareness of space, shape and measure. For example, they look at polygons and grading by finding the correct holes for different sizes and depths of cylinders.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing rapidly. They take part in an excellent range of activities that promote curiosity and exploration. For example, they grow potatoes. First they look at the potatoes and check each day for the shoots before planting them in a container and care for the plants with the guidance from staff. They enjoy an activity where they look at cards depicting animal skeletons and are able to match the correct animal to the bones. This promotes lots of conversation about bones and the different shapes. Later the learning is extended because the member of staff brings out a human skeleton shape for the children to look at. Children are active recyclers. They have access to boxes where they independently deposit cardboard and paper to be recycled. They play with magnets and look with wonder at how the iron filings move around in their sealed containers and how items are attracted or repelled. They enjoy sitting underneath the table with the magnet and making the metal objects on the table move around. Most children are competent in using the computer. They are skilled in navigating the mouse around games and paint box programmes and they show pride through smiling and calling over a member of staff to see when they have completed all the tasks in the programme. Children are actively encouraged to be creative and have daily opportunities to select their own art and craft materials to create pictures or models. They enjoy playing musical instruments, listen to various styles of music and sing songs from memory. They benefit from the Montessori equipment that involves sensorial experiences, such as feeling the different textures of fabric and brushes as well as different solid shapes and smells.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The staff are dedicated to the children who benefit from their high quality and positive interaction. The setting has an effective key worker system in place. Individual learning plans are developed for all children by the key workers which ensures that activities provided for them are appropriately challenging and follow their interests. These include practical life, communication, language and literacy, sensorial, maths, understanding of the world and creative and imaginative play. The nursery works to a theme which is linked to all areas of learning and is personalised to ensure that all children are catered for individually. The provider is very successful in incorporating the Foundation Stage and the Montessori theories to provide a rounded experience for all children attending. The staff sit with children to present new activities to them and support them until they are confident to work independently. They demonstrate how to complete the tasks and give warm encouragement both verbally and through facial expressions. This actively develops children's confidence and self-esteem and promotes them to try new experiences. Children's progress is recorded on Montessori documents that identify all the activities and include dates when they were first presented, when children are practising and when they are proficient in an activity. Documents outlining the stepping stones are used alongside and key workers complete these when they are confident children are proficient before moving on to the next stepping stone. Short observations are recorded each day particularly around language and numeracy and if children show a particular interest they can be introduced to extended activities. For example, some children enjoy working with numbers and request some numeracy tasks each day. Each child has a book to record their progress. They select pieces of work completed to go in the book and paste them in themselves. Children's progression is clearly identifiable. The key workers record the date on every written record and they use their skills to know when to become involved, when to demonstrate and when to observe individual children. The detailed daily records show clearly the activities children have participated in which enables the staff to ensure they introduce them to areas they do not spontaneously access themselves to ensure that all areas of learning are covered. Key workers identify daily targets for individual children and provide opportunities during the session for children to carry out these activities. Children benefit from the key worker's sensitivity to them and if they are unwilling to try a new experience this is noted and the activity is re-introduced at a later date or the key worker will incorporate new experiences into activities the child enjoys. For example, if a child likes to use stickers these can be used to promote counting or colour recognition. The staff team give careful consideration to the themes in the nursery to ensure that they can be incorporated into all areas of learning. For example, a theme of 'safety' is incorporated into helping children learn about the wider world as part of activities and discussion about Japan and the earthquakes that happen in that part of the world. The staff are highly skilled practitioners who know the children very well, engage them in meaningful conversation and provide an environment that helps them learn and develop in all areas. They are knowledgeable and proficient in using the equipment that enables children to learn as individuals who lead their own play which contributes to positive outcomes for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit greatly from the high adult to child ratio and the sensitivity of the staff to their individual needs. Everyone is treated with respect and the setting does all it can to be flexible to meet the families' requirements. Children enjoy a wide range of activities that contribute to their awareness of the wider world. Lots of images are displayed through books, posters and resources that celebrate diversity and the staff ensure they carry out thorough research to make activities relating to other cultures meaningful to children. For example,

children enjoy learning about Japan. They examine a number of artefacts, clothing and pretend food in the shapes of sushi. A large doll is a key part of this project and the children know her name and take care of the items that go with her. A home-made picture book has been prepared to show aspects of Japanese daily life including schools, homes, shops as well as the damage done by earthquakes to link with the theme of safety. Children begin to learn French from one of the members of staff who involves them in songs, music and discussions including French words. They say 'hello' in French and the member of staff ensures she says the words in English as well to help children identify the words. The children are enthusiastic about this group time and join in with the songs and say 'hello' with great gusto. A good range of resources are available to children that promote awareness of the world. They look at a globe with a member of staff who shows them where the United Kingdom is situated and when the child asks for more detail the key worker takes them to a map of the British Isles and finds the village of Gamlingay. The staff understand the importance of raising children's awareness of other cultures through daily activities, not just through celebrating festivals. They ensure that children have access to appropriate props, such as dressing up clothes and books at all times. The setting welcomes children from other cultures and takes active steps to ensure their needs are met. For example, workers from the local authority are invited to the setting to confirm that children who speak English as an additional language are supported and settled in the nursery. Children are welcomed into the setting following thorough discussion with their parents to ensure that specific needs can be met. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are managed effectively and the staff work closely with their parents and any other agencies involved with them to ensure a consistent approach.

Children behave very well. They understand the expectations for behaviour because the staff have a consistent and fair approach. Staff are skilled in knowing when to intervene and manage behaviour very positively. They use distraction effectively and guide the children to activities when they become over excited. Children respond to the staff because they are gentle and clear in their explanations. They benefit from the calm approach and begin to show care and concern for each other. They help their friends to tidy away and show them where to find items in the room. Children understand that it is important to listen to each other and to respect different opinions which contributes to them valuing each other. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from a positive relationship between their parents and the staff because the staff ensure they are available to talk to them at the beginning and end of the day. Parents can have access to their child's record of progression at any time because it is kept in their individual drawer. Notice boards are available that show forthcoming events and general childhood information. A system is in place to record any complaints that may arise from parents relating to the National Standards. Parents report highly positive and complimentary comments about their children's experiences at the setting and their relationship with the staff. The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. Parents are provided with lots of written information in the form of leaflets, a prospectus and ongoing newsletters and magazines that give information about the activities that are provided in this Montessori nursery, how children learn, how parents can contribute to their learning at home through activities and discussion points and child health. They are involved in their child's learning at home because the themes are included in the newsletters. Parents are invited in to talk to the children and some take this on with enthusiasm by bringing in props and wearing their uniforms. This helps children learn about their jobs and develops a sense of partnership between home and the nursery. Before children start attending they are invited to visit the nursery and the provider ensures they have information about the Montessori method of teaching. Parents are

asked to provide information from home about their child's achievements to enable the key workers to make initial assessments for activities.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care, welfare and learning are positively promoted in this highly organised and professional setting. They are effectively managed as individuals and the high adult to child ratio ensures they receive plenty of one to one attention. The available space is well organised to enable children to move around independently and to select all of their own activities. The adjacent room is well used and provides a change of scenery for children when the weather prevents outdoor play. Robust systems are in place to ensure the suitability of staff and induction procedures are in place. Effective contingency plans have been devised for managing staff absences and all the required documentation is in place and is kept up to date. The written policies and procedures are clearly reflected in the staff's daily activity with children. The provider encourages staff to attend relevant training courses and often researches beforehand to ensure that the needs of the staff will be met before they attend. All the staff hold current first aid certificates which contributes to children receiving appropriate treatment in the event of accidents.

Leadership and management of funded children is outstanding. The staff team are extremely knowledgeable practitioners who are dedicated to providing children with high quality experiences that enhance their learning and development. They work very well together and this effective teamwork reflects on the children's feelings of well-being in the nursery. Good links have been established with the large number of schools that children leave the nursery to attend which contributes to a smooth transition when children move from nursery to school. Regular team meetings are held and daily informal discussions ensure that any issues arising can be managed promptly. The provider works with the staff to ensure the planning and assessment for all children is maintained and continues to meet their individual interests and promotes learning. The nursery completes self-evaluation documents that have been devised by Cambridgeshire County Council. This involves looking at their own practice, reviewing and evaluating to ensure children's needs continue to be met in imaginative and innovative ways. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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 the contents of the first aid box are checked frequently and replaced as necessary.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education 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