



The Montessori Children's House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY248359
Inspection date	07 June 2006
Inspector	Ceri Ann Mills
Setting Address	34 Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 2RG
Telephone number	(020) 8652 5662 (MOB) 07912894609
E-mail	
Registered person	The Montessori Children's House
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 Montessori Children's House has been registered since 2003.

It is privately owned and operates from St. Nicholas Community Hall in Sutton. It is close to the town centre and serves families from the local community.

Children have access to one hall and a fully enclosed outdoor play area. There are toilets, with nappy changing facilities and a kitchen. Disabled access is provided via a

ramp and chair lift.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday during term time from 09:00 until 15:00. Children may attend on a sessional or full time basis.

The nursery may care for up to 24 children from two years to under five years at any one time.

There are currently 37 children on roll, of these 17 children age three and four years receive nursery education funding.

The nursery welcomes children with special educational needs and supports many bi-lingual children.

There are six adults who work directly with the children, including the owner, of whom 5 hold qualifications in early years, and or Montessori teaching. There is also a Dance teacher and a French tutor who visit the setting once a week.

The nursery's curriculum is underpinned by the principals of the Montessori approach to learning.

The nursery receives support from the Local Authority Early Years and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very clean, spacious and well maintained environment. Children's good health is promoted well most of the time as staff apply effective procedures and practices to ensure children's physical, nutritional, health and welfare needs are met.

All equipment is clean and hygienic, nappy changing arrangements prevent cross infection and ensure children's privacy, spills are quickly cleared up and tables are thoroughly cleaned before and after refreshments.

Children learn about health and hygiene and are developing good skills in self care through the daily routines. They understand why they must wear hats when playing outside in the sun and automatically wash their hands after using the toilet. However, procedures for hand washing before children take food are inconsistent, which may result in the spread of infection.

Children benefit from the relaxed and social occasion created at snack and lunch time. Their dietary needs are effectively met because staff are knowledgeable about children's individual requirements, as a result of the comprehensive information provided by parents and detailed recording systems. The setting takes account of the information when planning the weekly cooking activities and works closely with

parents to promote children's good health. Through discussion and regular newsletters parents receive information on matters such as sun safety and healthy food for lunch boxes.

Children develop a very good understanding of healthy eating as they make selections from the healthy options of different fruit at snack time. Children recognise when they are thirsty and independently pour themselves a drink of water. Through first hand experiences, such as watering the flowers in the garden, they are becoming increasingly aware of the water's importance for healthy growth and development of living things.

Children are beginning to learn the positive effects food has on their bodies, through everyday discussions. For example, children happily talk to staff about what they had eaten for breakfast. The staff member is attentive to what children say and responds by saying that having a healthy breakfast gives them lots of energy and then asks the children to think about what activities require energy.

Children are well cared for if they become unwell or have an accident because all staff have the required first aid skills. Clear procedures safeguard children in the event of emergency treatment being required and when medication is administered.

Children have regular opportunities to play in the fresh air and to be active, which keeps them healthy and promotes a positive attitude to exercise. Children enthusiastically participate in the weekly dance session which helps children develop a range of physical skills. They show confidence as they climb apparatus and negotiate space well when riding wheeled toys, pushing wheelbarrows and using smaller equipment, such as hoops and balls.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in stimulating surroundings which are safe and secure because staff are vigilant about children's safety and ensure this by the effective implementation of a daily risk assessment and detailed policies and procedures. Children's security is carefully monitored, particularly at arrival and collection times and they are effectively protected from adults who are not vetted. Visitors are not able to gain access to the building without alerting staff and a record is made of their presence. However, the current arrangement of completing the visitors form at the end of the visit may compromise safety.

Children's safety in relation to child protection is assured because staff have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities, enabling them to follow appropriate procedures. A child protection policy, which covers all aspects well, is made available to parents so they know that a child's safety is the setting's first priority.

Children's welfare is safeguarded in the event of an emergency. For example, appropriate fire safety equipment is available and fire drills are routinely carried out, so staff and children are familiar with evacuation procedures.

Children learn to keep themselves safe and develop a clear understanding for the appropriate use of equipment.

They handle tools, such as scissors and hammers, with great care and control and talk about the dangers of fire as they creatively make flames for the birthday cake candles.

Children are cared for in a bright, well organised and child centred learning environment. They greatly benefit from being able to choose to play either inside or outside, and move freely and safely between both areas throughout the session. A canopy protects children from the direct sun as they play in the garden.

Staff deployment is excellent, which ensures children are well supervised and a high adult: child ratio is maintained at all times.

An extensive range of suitable and appealing equipment is available and children easily access their own resources which helps to develop and sustain high levels of independence.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children arrive with enthusiasm and relish their time in the setting. They are ready to learn and quickly immerse themselves in self chosen activities. Staff work extremely hard to create a wonderfully stimulating and child centred environment. The walls are adorned with children's art work; equipment is appealing and easily accessible in clearly defined areas of learning.

Children show great interest in all the equipment, confidently select tasks and use the materials purposefully. For example, in the practical life area they learn how to pour, transfer, open, close and carry apparatus correctly. Younger children benefit from working alongside older children as they increase in confidence and independence following what others do.

Children's learning is extremely well supported through high quality adult: child interactions. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs when introducing them to new experiences, as a result children's independent skills are exceptionally well developed. They put on their own aprons, pour their own drinks and carefully put away resources when they have finished with them.

Careful planning and effective deployment of staff helps children to sustain a high level of concentration and achieve positive results. For example, as a child successfully matches the wooden numerals one-nine the staff member asks the child if she would like to put them in order. The child happily continues with the task and is able to sequence one, two, three and four correctly and is delighted with the achievement.

Children make excellent progress in all areas of development because staff recognise how children learn most effectively and use effective strategies to support

children's independence.

Children's creative and imaginative skills are very well explored as they represent their ideas through role play and music. They enthusiastically participate in the creation of their own music using a variety of instruments and benefit from hearing a diverse range of background music, which helps to create a calm and tranquil atmosphere during the session.

Children extend their decision making to whether they wish to play in or out of doors. They thoroughly enjoy playing out of doors where the learning environment provides exciting and stimulating challenges for all ages and abilities. Children begin to make sense of the world and show fascination as they freely explore natural materials and objects using magnifying glasses and magnets.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the Foundation Stage framework which is clearly evident in their planning, showing that children experience a full curriculum underpinned by the principals of the Montessori approach to learning.

Children take initiative and play a dynamic role in their learning because staff allow them to interpret activities for themselves, whilst ensuring excellent levels of support and guidance. More able children are consistently challenged in order to move them on in their learning at a good pace.

Children are highly motivated and engaged in their chosen activities and make excellent progress across all six areas of learning because the setting provides a wealth of challenging activities and first hand experiences.

Children competently handle a wide range of tools, such as hole punchers and sticky tape, and use pencils to label their work. They enthusiastically practise emergent writing in a variety of situations, such as making their own story books, and form recognisable letters.

Children recognise their own names on their aprons and coat pegs, with some more able children reading and writing each other's names. They link sounds and letters with increasing accuracy and recognise many letters and words around the environment.

Children have a wonderful time sharing a story with a staff member and enthusiastically participate in the group story sessions. Their listening skills are very good and during show and tell time they are polite and respectful to each other. Children speak very confidently, expressing their ideas and experiences well, using an excellent range of rich vocabulary.

Children have extensive opportunities to develop their curiosity and investigative skills. They show high levels of observation as they examine objects on the nature table and in the discovery basket. Children develop a good understanding of time

and the changes in seasons as they tend the plants in the garden.

Children's understanding of number is very well developed because staff make excellent use of routines and incidental opportunities to encourage children to count and compare numbers. There are many opportunities for children to use and recognise numerals around the hall and an extensive range of resources to support mathematical concepts.

Children's achievements are well recorded as staff undertake rigorous assessments. Staff use this information to plan children's next steps for learning. Teaching is consistently inspiring and challenging for all children and staff ensure children are continually making progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children exude confidence and settle extremely well. The familiarity of the routine and warm welcome received from staff, helps children develop a strong sense of belonging.

Children flourish in the setting because they are exceptionally well supported by staff who encourage them to become competent and independent learners. Children make their own choices from the wide range of appealing activities provided, know where items belong and enjoy the responsibility of tidying up.

Children show an excellent attitude towards one another and are extremely helpful and self assured. For example, an older child sits with a younger child, who is fascinated with a piece of equipment, and carefully demonstrates how to use the play materials correctly. Shortly after the younger child makes an excellent attempt at completing the activity independently. Staff treat both of the children equally by acknowledging their achievements with lots of warm praise, which helps to build their confidence and self esteem.

Children greatly benefit from the staff's consistent and positive approach to behaviour management. As a result they play harmoniously together learning to take turns and negotiate this with confidence, such as when sharing the brooms and watering cans in the garden. Children show genuine concern for one another and benefit enormously from the integrated outside learning environment.

Children gain an extremely well developed respect for themselves and others as they learn about the local community and the wider world. They freely access a wide variety of resources, celebrate many different festivals and mix with a diverse group of children and adults, which raises their awareness of the differences and similarities within society. As a result children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of the children is outstanding. The setting gives a high priority to establishing and sustaining successful links with home to ensure parents are actively involved in their child's learning .

Parents receive substantial details about the provision and have plenty of opportunities to discuss the curriculum and philosophy of the setting, which helps them to understand how their child learns and develops through play. Regular meetings are arranged between parents and staff to discuss children's progress and there is an excellent system in place for keeping parents informed of their child's achievements each day.

Key staff maintain comprehensive records of children's individual developmental progress and work closely with parents to plan their child's next steps for learning.

Children greatly benefit from the opportunities to extend their learning at home. For example, the setting has a weekly book loaning scheme whereby children select a book for their parents to read to them at home and on return staff spend time reviewing the story with the child, which helps to strengthen memory, enhance language skills and encourage an appreciation of books.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's welfare, care and learning is significantly enhanced by the exceptional organisation of the setting.

Children receive excellent levels of support and thrive in an inclusive environment in which every child matters.

All staff have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the provision because of the highly effective implementation of the operational plan.

Time, space and resources are exceptionally well used and the learning environment enables children to reach their maximum potential. A highly effective key worker system operates which enhances the relationship between home and the setting. As a result children's individual needs are fully met.

Staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn and a secure knowledge of child development. The setting skilfully maps the Montessori curriculum to the Birth to three matters framework for younger children and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Consequently, children make very good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children benefit from the commitment of a well qualified and consistent staff team. There are robust recruitment and induction procedures in place, which ensures staff are properly vetted and suitable to look after children. Staff performance is monitored and assessed both formally and informally and ongoing training identified to further enhance the expertise of staff and the rich experiences offered to children.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well being is in place. Records are clear, up to date, easily accessible and stored securely.

The leadership and management of the setting is outstanding, which has an extremely positive effect on children's learning. Management influences practice on a daily basis and places a high priority on recognising strengths within the provision and identifying areas in which further improvement could be made. The setting is currently working towards accreditation of which part of the process involves self evaluation of practices and seeking views of service users.

Regular staff meetings and rigorous monitoring of children's personal development ensure all children are continually making rapid progress, thrive and respond to challenges. As a result the setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to devise a lost child procedure and to add to the complaints procedure the name and telephone number of Ofsted as regulator.

The setting has acted on both ensuring written procedures are in place for staff and parents to follow.

At the last education inspection the provider was asked to improve opportunities for children to explore different joining, assembling and connecting techniques.

This has been addressed by providing construction resources such as cogs, wheels, nuts and bolts, which children of all ages and abilities can join and make work.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted 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.

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 good hygiene practices are adopted before handling food
- revise procedures for the recording of visitors

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 *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk