



# Learning Tree Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** 137819  
**Inspection date** 10 January 2007  
**Inspector** Victoria Vasiliadis

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**Registered person** Eileen Wilson  
**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](http://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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Learning Tree Montessori Nursery School opened in 1995. It operates from the ground floor of a private house in the borough of Brent. The setting has access to three main classrooms, with additional access to smaller areas for arts and crafts activities and a separate lunch-hut. The nursery is open from 08.00 to 16.00 term-time only. There is a secure garden for outdoor play.

There are currently 48 children on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports a number of children who have English as an additional language and a number of children with learning difficulties.

The setting currently employs seven staff who work directly with the children, six of these staff hold a relevant child care qualification. One member of staff is working towards a childcare qualification.

The setting follows the Montessori ethos and receives support from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is inadequate.

Children's health within the setting is not always adequately supported by staff, who do not follow environmental health recommendations sufficiently. For example, there are no systems in place to measure the temperature of the children's lunches that are reheated. The current practice presents the risk of incidents of food poisoning if food is not heated to correct temperatures. Recent procedures for the administering of medication did not ensure the children's safety during the administration of medication. The policy has been revised following a specific incident and now two members of staff must be present when medication is being administered, this is to safeguard the children. However, records of such incidents are poorly recorded and Ofsted was not notified of this significant incident within the required timeframe. This is a breach of regulation.

Children are protected from incidents of infection and cross-contamination as the setting has in place appropriate policies and procedures. For example, children must not attend the setting if they are unwell with a contagious illness. Children's packed lunches containing dairy products are stored appropriately in the fridge. Extra care is taken in the storage of lunches where children have identified allergies.

The children have some opportunities to learn about their own health and personal hygiene. For example, staff talk to the children about eating healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables as it will make them grow big and strong. Children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Children enjoy a selection of activities which contribute to their health. Each day there are outdoor activities to help them develop control of their bodies and use their large motor skills. For example, tunnels, scooters, tricycles, climbing frame and a slide. These outdoor games improve children's physical development.

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

The provision is inadequate.

Children's safety is compromised as systems to ensure those who have not been vetted do not have unsupervised access to children are inadequate. However, most of the staff have a clear understanding of the settings child protection policy and local safeguarding children procedures. They are aware of the reporting procedures to follow if abuse is suspected and the necessary documentation is in place to support their practice.

Resources are stored in each room within easy reach of the children which means that they are able to make independent choices. Children are adequately supervised and appropriate procedures are in place. This ensures children are collected safely by parents or carers. Daily risk assessments carried out by staff are not always successful in ensuring that all areas used by the children are safe. For example, a large drum barrel in the garden filled with dirty water poses as a potential hazard to the children.

Children have access to premises that are warm and welcoming. Their art work is attractively displayed and some pieces of work are mounted in frames. There are photos of children at play displayed at the children's level. The rooms are organised for the varying ages of the children in attendance, with separate areas for the children under three and over three. However, space is poorly organised in the lunch-hut where 17 children sit to eat their lunch. This area provides insufficient space for the children to move freely and comfortably.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The children under three are engaged throughout their time within the setting. They play happily with each other and children are encouraged to share and take turns. Children have access to a range of Montessori resources and particularly enjoy dressing up as animals and completing puzzles of varying levels. They benefit from resources that are stimulating, challenging and age appropriate in order to extend their learning and enjoyment.

Most of the children are comfortable, settled and happy at the nursery. Warm and caring relationships with the staff increase the children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self-worth. Children are spoken to in a warm, positive and caring manner by staff. Children are comforted appropriately by staff, in particular the new children settling who are, at times, upset when dropped off by parents. The setting has appropriate procedures in place to help children settle.

### **Nursery Education:**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum which enables them to plan and provide a range of activities. Staff conduct regular observations of the children's development. However, observations are not evaluative. They are not significantly linked to the stepping stones and do not identify the next steps in children's learning. As a result, staff do not sufficiently plan for these. The organisation of some of the activities does not meet the needs of all the children. For example, the older children are disturbed by the behaviour of the younger children during a music and movement session. They become fidgety and disinterested as they are unable to be fully involved. As a result, they do not benefit from this activity and therefore their learning is limited.

Children develop independence skills as they are able to access resources that are at their physical level. They are encouraged to make choices and once they have completed an activity they put it away. Children are able to use the bathroom independently and the more able children are able to put on and take off their outdoor clothes with ease.

A range of art activities are planned and children are able to express their own ideas and imagination. Children have opportunities to use tools such as pencils, scissors, art and craft tools. Children have opportunities to develop their fine motor skills as they use the Montessori equipment. They enjoy completing puzzles of varying difficulties and the more able children use the computer and mouse confidently.

Children have opportunities to develop awareness of their own environment and the wider world. For example, they develop an understanding of diverse cultures and their own beliefs when participating in festival celebrations and there are visual images displayed around the nursery that reflect positive images. Children hear and speak different languages within the setting such as Hindi, Gujarati and French. Songs and nursery rhymes are taught to the children in these languages and children take part in organised French lessons.

Children are confident speakers and engage in conversations with each other and adults. There are a selection of books available, but children show little interest in the books. The children have too few opportunities to make up their own stories and to use books to locate information. Children do have a developing understanding of the purpose of written language in their environment. For example, different areas of the nursery are labelled such as the cultural area and practical life area, along with draws labelled with children names.

Children count confidently and many can count beyond ten in familiar context. They are able to describe size and shapes during their play. They confidently complete puzzles of varying challenges and use the Montessori equipment to support their understanding of problem solving.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are provided with a range of resources that reflect positive images such as dolls, books, globes and maps of the world. These resources are beginning to increase the children's awareness of diversity and understanding of others within the wider community. Children have opportunities to hear and speak a variety of languages during planned activities. The setting has a sufficient understanding of the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator present and written policies are in place.

Children are generally well behaved and polite in response to the expectations of staff. They are encouraged to take turns, share and to have regard for others. Staff respect the children and this is influenced in the children's behaviour and the calm atmosphere created by the staff. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the behaviour management statement does not make reference to bullying. As a result staff do not know the procedures to follow if a child is being bullied.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. There are appropriate systems in place to share information with parents. For example, staff exchange information with parents about their child's day and provide termly developmental reports which focus on the six areas of learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

The leadership and management for the nursery education is satisfactory. The staff's training needs have been identified and a training programme sought to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. However, assessment processes are not satisfactorily linked to the stepping stones and do not identify the next steps for children's learning.

The setting has in place most of the required legal documents relating to the National Standards. However, the attendance register is not consistently completed to show the arrival and departure times of all the children. The behaviour management statement does not make reference to bullying, and the accident and medication records are not consistently signed by parents. Children's safety is compromised, as a result of the inadequate systems in place to monitor those staff who have not been vetted having unsupervised access to the children. Significant incidents are not appropriately recorded and Ofsted not notified of significant events. This is a breach of regulation.

Over half of the staff working directly with children hold a recognised childcare qualification. At times, staff are not sufficiently deployed to ensure that the minimum adult to child ratios are applied. Group times, in particular lunch time is not adequately organised. This affects the safety and care of the children and therefore, the inspection is judged as inadequate. The setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous care inspection a number of recommendations and actions were raised: to notify Ofsted of changes in staff; maintain staff to child ratios; ensure no more than eight children use the lunch hut; maintain the hours of attendance of each child; review the organisation of the groups to meet the needs of the children; provide adequate heating; supervise the children appropriately; provide appropriate hand drying facilities and develop staff knowledge of child protection.

The setting has still not completed some of these actions and recommendations. Daily registers do not consistently record the hours of attendance or departure of children. Staff to child ratios are not consistently maintained. The organisation of group activities in particular at lunch time and the number of children in the lunch hut have not been addressed. As a result, children's health, safety and well-being are affected. They have again been raised as a result of this inspection. However, the setting has addressed the issues relating to the heating, supervision of children and hand drying facilities.

There were a number of key issues arising from the nursery education inspection: in relation to planning, evaluation and assessment procedures; staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage; opportunities for children's creative development and understanding of living things. Most of these issues have now been addressed adequately with the exception of the evaluation and assessment procedures. These have been raised again as a result of this inspection.

## Complaints since the last inspection

Since the 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.

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure registers consistently record the arrival and departure times of all children
- ensure Ofsted is notified of significant events within the required timeframes and appropriate records maintained of any incidents that occur
- ensure Environmental Health recommendations are adhered to at all times
- ensure adult to child ratios are maintained at all times, paying particular attention to the children under 3 years
- ensure space is organised appropriately so that children's needs are met, paying particular attention to the way in which the lunch-hut is used and by how many children
- ensure that there are effective procedures in place to prevent staff who are not suitably vetted having unsupervised access to children
- ensure children are not exposed to hazards in the garden.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review and evaluate the assessment processes, so that they are significantly linked to the stepping stones and ensure they show clear links to children's development and the next steps in their learning

- strengthen the programme for communication, language and literacy by providing more opportunities for children to use books to locate information and to make up their own stories
- ensure the organisation of specific group activities meets the needs of all 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)