



Phoenix Montessori Nursery School and Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	254224
Inspection date	15 November 2006
Inspector	Marianne Gascoyne
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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?

Phoenix Montessori Nursery School and Day Nursery opened in 1985. It operates from four main rooms in purposely-converted premises in the village of Terrington St. Clement. A maximum of 52 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year and the out of school club from 07.45 to 18.00 during school holidays. The nursery school sessions are from 09.00 to 12.00 and 13.00 to 16.00 each weekday during school term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 85 children from three months to eight years on roll. Of these, 40 children receive funding for early years education. Children come from a wide area and attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a small number of children with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a small number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 16 members of staff who work with the children. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Of these, three have Montessori diplomas. Two members of staff are studying for an early years degree. An administrator, cook and cleaner are also employed.

The nursery uses Montessori teaching methods. It has Investors in People status and has gained a quality assurance award. The setting has been awarded the Mayor's Award for Business Achievement. It receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well promoted due to effective practices employed by staff and children. Children are independent in meeting their own personal needs and wash their hands at appropriate times during the routine of the day or when undertaking activities involving food, needing little reminding from staff. Explanations given by staff have made them aware of the risk from germs and they are developing effective hygiene routines from an early age. Procedures employed by staff and facilities available to children, reduce the risk of cross-infection. Effective measures are in place to ensure the premises and equipment are maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Staff are appropriately qualified in first aid and parents have given their permission to enable them to seek medical advice or care in an emergency. Children's well-being is therefore safeguarded as staff are able to take the necessary action if they are ill or injured while attending the nursery. Records held on the computer, in addition to personal files, help staff to monitor why accidents occur. The sick children policy reduces the risk of cross-infection.

Children are extremely well nourished by freshly cooked wholesome meals and savoury biscuits for snacks made each day on the premises. Mealtimes are enjoyed by all the children who practise their independence skills, use a knife and fork and serve themselves with extra helpings. Children are developing excellent social skills as they sit to eat together and converse with each other and the adults at the table.

They thrive because the nursery takes account of allergies, likes and dislikes in providing food. Nursery school children take delight in cutting up their own choice of fruit at the snack table, choosing when to eat and conversing happily with a member of staff. Staff use this opportunity to develop children's understanding of healthy eating. Children confidently help themselves to fresh drinking water recognising the need to drink to keep themselves healthy. Children in the baby/toddler room are equally well nourished by the food provided. They are encouraged to practise their independence skills by feeding themselves, sitting at specially designed age appropriate furniture.

Children are developing a very positive attitude to fresh air and exercise. They relish the regular opportunities to play outside in the garden using the range of equipment available to them. Staff plan and make observations to ensure children have opportunities to develop all their

physical skills. The Montessori materials help children refine their manipulative skills and develop their small muscles.

Each room in the nursery has suitable comfortable seating to enable children to rest or relax in comfort. However, some children under three are rocked to sleep in pushchairs and are not encouraged to use the comfortable accessible facilities in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children feel warmly welcomed and secure in the safe, child-centred setting. Furniture, equipment and displays, together with vases of flowers on the tables in the older children's rooms, create an attractive environment. The warm welcome given by staff helps children to separate from parents and settle easily. Children are able to choose from a very good range of Montessori and other equipment easily accessible to them on low shelving and they are very quickly involved in activities. The layout of the nursery school rooms encourages children's play. The layout in the baby/toddler room is not so effective at all times of the day. Child sized furniture and comfortable settees enable children throughout the nursery to sit and eat or play and relax in comfort. Babies are able to sleep in comfort in cots in the quiet sleep room.

The staff are vigilant in ensuring children's safety on arrival and departure and at all times during the day. Internal doors are fitted with key pads and external doors and gates locked when all children are present to enable children to play in a secure environment. A detailed risk assessment is completed in all areas and action taken to minimise dangers. The health and safety policy is included in the induction of new members of staff to ensure all staff are aware of procedures for safeguarding children and themselves. Children practise regular fire drills so that they are confident in evacuating the building quickly. They stay safe when taken on outings as a risk assessment is carried out of the venue and emergency equipment and information is carried by staff. Staff set up play situations, when using the ride-one toys, to develop children's understanding of road safety and this is reinforced on walks in the village. Staff are proactive in anticipating risks to crawling/climbing babies in order to safeguard their welfare.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded by a robust child protection policy and the knowledge of senior staff gained from attendance on training courses. All staff are aware of the need to report any concerns to the designated member of staff who deals with referrals. Up to date Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance is to hand and staff refer to this guide while following the procedure in the 'What To Do If You Are Worried A Child Is Being Abused' document. Parents are made aware of the nursery's responsibility to report any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and enjoy their time at the nursery. They eagerly enter the playrooms and immediately choose activities from the excellent range of equipment easily accessible on low shelving. They quickly become engrossed in their play. Children are able to concentrate

for long periods at activities of their choosing and play cooperatively together. Firm friendships are in place.

Children benefit from excellent relationships with the staff who are consistently kind, caring and attentive in their approach. They listen to the children who are confident in sharing experiences with them and join in with meaningful conversations. Staff are sensitive and skilled at not interrupting their play but choosing the right moment to introduce them to new Montessori concepts. Children's concentration skills are encouraged, for example, as they play a game in a small group. Effective use of praise helps them to persevere with challenges at this time and consequently the self-esteem of the younger children is enhanced as they complete the task.

There are many opportunities for children to develop their independence in their choice of activity, personal care and at mealtimes. As a result children are confident and self-assured with very young children, for example, demonstrating their delight in being able to put on their own coats for outdoor play.

Children under three are sociable and developing their language with confidence. Staff encourage very young children to communicate and babies as young as three months enjoy responding to staff as they talk to them. They are encouraged to be sociable and join in with activities together. They take part in music and movement sessions and sit attentively to listen to stories joining in with the actions where appropriate, for example, going on a 'Bear Hunt'. They are given opportunities to explore different materials, for example, children enjoy playing with play dough and printing. Staff encourage children's play, although they do not always help children to make connections in their learning and follow their interests by, for example, introducing them to items available to them on the low shelving units as they play with the play kitchen.

Staff are very familiar with the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use it very effectively to plan for the younger children and assess their progress. They maintain a record of children's progress using observations and photographs. These are colour coded to help staff and parents see how children are progressing in all aspects and identify the next steps in their learning. Staff follow the interests of children under three in the nursery school in line with the framework.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are motivated to learn and confident to try new experiences. They are making very rapid progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of their learning due to the excellent knowledge staff have of the Foundation Stage and the use of Montessori equipment. Their knowledge of individual children's progress, based on frequent observations, enables them to plan the next steps in their learning and ensure they move forward in the knowledge they gain. Children spend concentrated periods exploring the properties of the various pieces of equipment and using them in a variety of ways. Staff are enthusiastic and delight in helping children learn using questioning, demonstration and discussion effectively to ensure they make progress. Focussed activities offer new experiences, for example, children enjoy making biscuits in aid of 'Children in Need' learning about weight and volume as they measure the ingredients and noticing the changes that occur

as they mix and cook the biscuits. Staff know individual children well and plan for the inclusion of all children.

Children's decision making skills are well developed and they confidently choose the activities they wish to undertake. They get on well together, are kind and caring towards each other and friendships are in place. They make an active contribution to each session by helping tidy up when asked and clearing the tables at lunchtime. Children demonstrate a maturity beyond their years as they wait for a turn on the computer and give help by demonstrating to a child, having difficulty operating the programme, without taking over. Children are very confident communicators and enjoy conversations with the adults and each other. They are learning to link sounds to letters using the Montessori sandpaper letters, are starting to form letters in their mark making and are able to identify them in the environment. Older children share in writing the words to use in displays helping them to recognise that words have meaning. A small group of friends enjoy practising their emergent writing as they write 'letters' and place them in envelopes. Children take an active part in storytime using model houses they have made themselves and joining in and predicting as they listen to the story of 'Six Dinner Sid'.

Children are confident in the use of numbers because staff take advantage of opportunities within the daily routine for them to count and calculate, for example, as they go outside to play or lay the table. Children's mathematical thinking is encouraged by use of the Montessori equipment as they consider concepts such as sequencing. Children recognise written numerals as they use the computer programmes to develop their mathematical understanding. Staff take advantage of opportunities to develop children's understanding of the natural world as they take magnifying boxes into the garden to look at caterpillars or care for stick insects. Children are fascinated by an activity looking for 'dinosaur bones' in the sand and learning to understand the meaning of the word 'Palaeontologist' and being inspired to find out more about dinosaurs. They are confident in using a digital camera to record children's activities and operate the computer competently. Children's knowledge of the wider world is developed through an interesting range of topics, including celebration of the festivals of Purim and Diwali and exploring the Italian language and culture.

Children's sensory development is very well promoted using the Montessori equipment available to them, for example, they sort coloured objects, feel fabrics of different textures and explore the properties of wet and dry sand. Children have opportunities to take part in planned role play activities such as the doctors surgery and also develop their own imaginative play in the home corners. Their creative skills are well developed as they paint at the easel or choose to create collage pictures from a variety of materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff have a high regard for children in their care, enjoy their role and positive relationships are in place with an atmosphere of mutual respect evident throughout the nursery. Children are valued as individuals. They show a strong sense of belonging enhanced by the use of photographs throughout the nursery and displays of their own work. The free choice of activities throughout almost all the day ensures children have equality of opportunity. Children are being

encouraged to celebrate diversity as they explore their own and other cultures through celebration of festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Diwali and Purim.

Parents complete a booklet 'All About Me' before their child starts at the nursery which includes details of individual care needs. The setting is proactive identifying additional needs and enabling all children to be fully included in activities. Staff are experienced in caring for children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and have undertaken training by health professionals to enable them to provide the necessary care and support. They work with parents and other professionals to obtain any additional support needed and individual education plans support the children's development. Appropriate activities are provided and progress closely monitored to help children of all abilities to reach their full potential.

The 'golden rules' for staff provide very positive behaviour management advice and clear boundaries for children. This, together with the superb role models provided by staff and respect shown to children, encourages them to behave well. Children work very harmoniously together, are kind and caring, show mutual respect and have high self-esteem. The confident, happy children are very well occupied and any minor behavioural difficulties are quickly handled by staff giving clear explanations for the reason children need to change their way of behaving, for example, 'if you throw sand, it may go in eyes and someone may get hurt'. As a result children's behaviour is exemplary.

The setting works very closely with parents for the benefit of the children. New parents have two inductions, one a home visit and one a visit to the nursery. During these visits they meet their children's 'special person' who plays with the children with the consequence that the children are familiar with their key worker when they start at nursery. All the necessary documentation to safeguard children's welfare is completed at this time.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. Parents are provided with a very attractive brochure which clearly explains how the setting will help children to work towards the early learning goals. Eye catching photographic displays provide parents with examples of how the nursery is helping the children to gain knowledge in all areas of their learning. Parents provide information to help the nursery assess their children's starting points by completing a booklet when they first start. They are encouraged to be involved with their children's learning and contribute to their assessment records throughout their children's time in the nursery. Information is exchanged on a daily basis and formal parents evenings are held when parents are encouraged to look at and discuss their children's progress records. During these evenings a talk is given on topics such as 'Ways parents can help their children's learning at home' or 'Behaviour Management' to encourage parents to work with the nursery for the benefit of their children. Consequently, parents speak very positively about the education their children receive at the nursery.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children demonstrate excellent table manners as they eat a meal together sharing and taking turns at helping themselves to second helpings from the serving dish. They are very confident and have high self-esteem demonstrated in the way they make decisions about the activities they wish to undertake and concentrate for long periods at the activities of their choosing. They make friends easily and show care and consideration for others. They enjoy conversations with adults

and other children. Planned activities and experiences of food from different countries help them to value diversity and appreciate other cultures. Children have a clear understanding of right from wrong and are well behaved responding to the clear boundaries and positive role models provided by staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All staff have an appropriate childcare qualification and are committed to continual improvement and development through further training to update their knowledge. They work well together as a team supporting each other and are involved in decision making in all aspects of the operation of the nursery. The recent reorganisation of the premises has worked very positively for the benefit of the children and staff. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures, together with a comprehensive induction programme, mean staff are appointed who are suitable and have a high regard for the children. 'Butterfly' staff provide cover in an emergency to ensure ratios are always met. Staff meet regularly to plan, monitor and evaluate the care and education they provide. Staff have sound knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and Foundation Stage and as a consequence help children to make meaningful progress.

All legally required documentation is maintained to a high standard and records held on the computer are backed up with paper records which can be shared with parents. Use of the computer enables records to be quickly accessed and monitoring to be carried out to safeguard children's welfare. The extensive operational plan, which is shared with all parents, provides accurate guidance which underpins practice in the nursery. Overall, the range of children's needs are met.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The management team provide superb support and are effective role models for all staff. A belief in involving staff in decision making about changes in the nursery helps ensure they are effectively implemented. A mentoring system and comprehensive induction helps new staff to quickly work as part of the team and understand the ethos of the nursery. Training needs are identified at annual appraisals and staff are encouraged to undertake training of their choice and also attend training which the management team have identified as a need or requirement, for example, first aid. The setting is continually monitoring and evaluating the care and education they provide and seeking to make improvements. Questionnaires are given to parents to gain their views. A business plan is written with input from all staff and an action plan written. The setting has been asked to be a Champion for the Investors in People Award scheme and recently renewed their quality award demonstrating their commitment to constant improvement. Consequently, children benefit from the care and education they receive and make rapid progress in all areas of their learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to continue the ongoing review of the organisation of the setting to maintain the high standards in place. The setting has recently reviewed the use of the premises and made changes to improve the provision for the benefit of the children.

At the last education inspection the provider agreed to continue to monitor and review the quality of the educational provision in order to maintain the high standards achieved. The setting has continued to monitor and review the quality of the educational provision by providing questionnaires for parents to complete when their children leave to go to school, valuing advice given by the local authority link teachers and re-completing the quality assurance scheme in order to continue to provide high quality education for the children in their care.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 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.

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):

- develop arrangements for children's rest and sleep in line with 'Birth to three matters'.

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