

# Pillar Box Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119603
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 March 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Amanda Joy
<b>Setting Address</b>	107 Bow Road, Bow, London, E3 2AN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8980 0700
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<b>Registered person</b>	Pillar Box Nurseries Ltd.
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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?

Pillar Box Montessori Nursery opened in 1995. It operates from a five storey Victorian house situated on the Bow Road in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. The premises is used solely for childcare. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 42 children may attend the facility at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:55, for 49 weeks of the year. There are currently 32 children from aged two to five years on roll. This includes 13 funded children. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs seven members of staff. All the members of staff hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a clean environment where staff follow appropriate health and hygiene practices, which help to sustain good hygiene levels. For instance, staff follow good hygiene practices during nappy changing routines. At meal times staff ensure they use gloves and aprons when serving food. Appropriate daily routines, such as children being reminded to wash their hands before eating, and wash their hands after using the toilet, ensure they understand the need for good personal hygiene. Three members of staff have received relevant first aid training. They implement procedures such as the recording of accidents appropriately to maintain good health.

Children benefit from the nutritional content and varied meals cooked on the premises. Children enjoy a daily selection of fresh fruit. Some of the vegetables served with main meals are freshly cooked. Children enjoy a roast dinner served with fresh cabbage and frozen vegetables. The staff work closely with parents to ensure children's allergies and individual dietary requirements are fully met. This information is clearly displayed in the group rooms. Most children enjoy eating their meals in a relaxed, sociable atmosphere. However, the organisation of snack times for three year old children limits their development of self-care and independence. Children sit and wait for long periods and not all children are involved in the preparation of snacks or drinks. Also, fresh drinking water is not always easily accessible. Therefore children cannot help themselves to a drink if they are thirsty.

Opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, be active and learn to control their bodies both indoors and outdoors are sound. Young children enjoy physical play and have daily opportunities to use the garden. They take part in music and movement sessions which helps them to develop their body awareness. Older children enjoy yoga where they have opportunities to concentrate on breathing and relaxation techniques. In the garden, children skilfully manoeuvre the football around the cones and enjoy playing hockey. This helps to develop their balance and co-ordination. Children competently use a wide range of small tools and equipment with increasing control including, scissors, pencils and glue sticks.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in individual rooms according to their age. There is sufficient space and resources for children to play, eat and rest at the nursery. The play equipment is in good condition and children make their own choices from a varied selection of resources. Books are available in each of the rooms although they are not always invitingly displayed. Home life resources are not always available which limits children's choice.

Children are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to keep themselves safe and recognise dangers. For example, children know they must walk carefully down the steep stairs as they move around the building. Staff further support their safety by ensuring parents leave children in the reception area whilst children are escorted to their rooms. This helps reduce congestion on the stairs at busy times. Good security systems are in place that protect children whilst on the premises. The front door remains locked and all parents, staff and visitors have to sign in and out.

Children are mainly kept safe with appropriate care and supervision however, the organisation and poor supervision in one of the rooms at lunch time puts children's safety at risk. Children put uncooked lentils in their mouths during play. Daily risk assessments of the premises and equipment are in place. This is to ensure children's safety although staff have overlooked the fact that not all sockets have covers on them.

Children's welfare is safeguarded well as the provision has all the required policies and procedures in place. Staff have a sound knowledge of the child protection procedures to ensure children's welfare is paramount. The manager has recently updated her child protection training to ensure her current knowledge and skills are current. This new information will be passed onto the staff team at internal training sessions.

Vetting procedures continue to be developed on an on-going basis. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Children are never left unsupervised with any adults until they have had the appropriate checks undertaken.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework, they also use the Montessori approach to care and education. Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities which help support their overall development.

Children are confident in the routines of the day. Toddlers under three develop a healthy dependence on the staff who are receptive to their individual needs. The staff follow younger children's individual routines for eating and sleeping, this contributes to their well-being. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework well which helps effectively support children in all areas of their development. Children are developing their self-assurance through close and affectionate relationships with staff. They are encouraged by staff to develop their independence. Younger children help clear away their dishes after lunch. They then wash and take off their shoes ready for a sleep.

Children are greeted warmly on arrival and settle well into the nursery. They have sound opportunities to participate in a range of activities both indoors and outdoors. They self-select a range of well labelled resources and enjoy exploring a range of senses as they play. Although, opportunities for children to express themselves freely and creatively through free creative play and role play is limited.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are generally busy and enjoy learning as they select what they want to do. There is a good balance of child-directed play and group activities. However, although staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum there are weaknesses in the consistency of teaching. The organisation of some activities and routines in the three year old room has a negative impact on their learning. The new manager has identified there are weaknesses in this room and an action plan is in place. Plans are in place to ensure the level of teaching is consistent with the good teaching practice elsewhere in the nursery.

An effective key-worker system and the use of regular observations and assessments mean that staff know the children well. They are able to build on children's interests and support

them well to extend their learning. Most staff use clear and open questioning techniques which take into account children's age and stage of learning, helping children to think for themselves.

Children are independent learners and are supported by well organised resources which they access confidently. Most children are developing good levels of personal independence for example, when they put their outdoor coats on. However, there are missed opportunities for three year old children to develop this further at snack times. Children concentrate well when they participate in exciting activities. Although for three year old children, their levels of concentration and behaviour sometimes deteriorate, when children have to sit for long periods.

Children recognise their names and older children confidently link sounds to letters. Children have lots of opportunities to develop their pre-writing skills as they freely access a variety of pencils and crayons. Many children confidently recognise and write their own names, although some write in capital letters instead of using lower case letters. They are keen to communicate with adults and children and express themselves well using a wide range of vocabulary. Although there are a range of books available these are not invitingly displayed, consequently children's enjoyment of self-selecting books is hindered.

Children are learning to count and understand numbers through a range of practical experiences; they count the scoops of lentils as they pour them from one bowl to another. They confidently recognise numbers one to nine when using cards. Their concept of mathematical ideas are developing well as they are encouraged to problem solve for themselves. They measure a range of natural resources and mix dyes together. They are beginning to learn addition and subtraction through singing songs such as, '10 fat sausages sizzling in a pan'.

Children have frequent opportunities to construct and build using a range of media. They stick straw on their pictures of birds nests, although staff do not extend their understanding of why they do this. They enjoy constructing using bricks; two children concentrate well as they make two long trains. Children do have access to a computer but this was not on during the inspection. Science materials give children good opportunities to explore and investigate; they concentrate well as they look at objects change shape through the magnifying glass. Although there are some activities to raise children's awareness of other cultures, this is not fully exploited and does not fully promote all children's individual backgrounds.

Children explore movement and rhythm through music and yoga. They use their imagination well as they tell each other a story. One child excitedly talks about being a princess and going to a party. Their imagination is shortlived as there are no opportunities or resources easily accessible to develop and extend on their imagination. Children draw freely using a range of crayons and talk enthusiastically about their pictures. One child draws a whale in the sea with the wind blowing. Opportunities for children to paint freely are limited, consequently their use of imagination in art and design is hindered.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and staff attending the scheme come from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Children are encouraged to develop a positive view of the wider community by having access to a satisfactory range of resources to promote a positive view of the wider world. However, equipment is limited in some of the rooms and not always accessible to children. The provision of activities to raise children's awareness of other cultures, lifestyles and abilities is not fully exploited. This limits their awareness of diversity and their understanding of others.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children of all abilities are given fully inclusive care by staff encouraging children to participate in all the activities provided. This ensures children have equal opportunities to maximise their enjoyment and potential. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure individual plans are in place and are effective in meeting children's needs. Makaton signs are displayed at low-level throughout the nursery, consequently children's ability to communicate is enhanced.

Children generally behave well in response to the nursery's clear ground rules. Children are encouraged to respect others. In the classrooms children use their 'indoor feet' and 'indoor voices' where they walk and talk quietly so they do not disturb others. They are encouraged to say 'please' and 'thank you' which they do most of the time when playing with one another.

Most staff are very good role models however, there are significant differences in the way children's behaviour is managed in one of the rooms which is not consistent with the rest of the nursery. This has a negative impact on children's behaviour and affects their learning. Children are not always engaged sufficiently and are sometimes ignored for long periods. This results in children displaying inappropriate behaviour and becoming bored and frustrated, particularly at snack time. In contrast the older children and younger children behave very well in response to consistent routines and clear expectations.

The partnership of parents who receive nursery education is good. Regular newsletter and notices ensure parents are informed about current topics and what their children are learning. Good information about the Foundation Stage curriculum is given to parents and they are able to view their child's records and assessments at any time. This helps parents to support and participate in their child's learning.

Parents receive very good information before the placement begins. They have copies of the nursery's policies and procedures, these set out clear expectations for both parties. The entrance area displays very detailed information about all aspects of the nursery provision and other matters relating to childcare. Some of the information is written in different languages to support parents who speak English as an additional language.

Parents receive good information about the 'Birth to three matters framework', which outlines the four main aspects of care. Parents are also able to borrow any documents from the library. Children benefit from effective information sharing with parents; all children receive written and verbal reports daily which ensure consistency of care.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory. Children are generally busy and making sound progress in most areas of their learning. However, there are weaknesses in teaching for the three year old children which has an adverse impact on the overall education the nursery provides. Systems to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the setting are currently being developed to ensure there is consistency in teaching for both three and four year old children. Staff have good opportunities to attend training courses and workshops, this is an area the new manager is keen to develop. The manager has implemented thorough staff inductions. These are normally carried out over a three month period, with weekly induction meetings to assess staff's individual progress. This ensures staff are suitable for the job and children receive effective support and encouragement to help them progress in their learning.

Children are cared for in a generally well organised environment. Most staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and effectively implement routines to give children a wide range of activities and experiences. Although, there are too few opportunities to explore other cultures and participate in free creative play and role play. Staff are very caring towards the children and know them well. Inclusion is a key feature of this setting whereby all children are made to feel valued and respected. This ensures children feel secure and confident and develop a high sense of self-worth.

The new manager has developed systems to ensure procedures for the on-going suitability of staff are in place in line with current legislation, although not all staff have signed a medical disclaimer. All current staff have had a criminal records bureau check to ensure their suitability.

Staff have a good understanding of health and safety and provide good supervision to ensure children remain safe. Most areas of the premises are safe. Children's health and individual needs are well met. The nursery has appropriate records in place to support their understanding of each child. The required documentation is in place; all records are well organised and stored with an awareness of confidentiality. The setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the setting was asked to provide a wider range of opportunities for children to be creative in art, dance, music and role-play and to ensure resources reflected disabilities. They also agreed to make the drain inaccessible and ensure children have the use of individual blankets and sheets.

The setting has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The drains in the garden are now inaccessible and are fitted with appropriate covers. Children have the use of their own individual bedding which is clearly labelled.

The nursery has some resources to reflect positive images of people with disabilities however, this is an area that still needs further development. Play equipment and books to reflect positive images of families of various backgrounds, lifestyles and abilities are not always easily accessible to children. This limits children's awareness and understanding of the wider world.

### **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 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

## 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):

- continue to develop systems to ensure the on-going suitability of staff
- further develop the range of activities to increase children's awareness and understanding of people from various lifestyles, cultures and abilities

### **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):

- continue to develop systems to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching
- improve opportunities for children to participate in free creative play and role play

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)