



The Beehive Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	107977
Inspection date	17 November 2006
Inspector	Christine Bonnett
Setting Address	St Michaels Church Hall, Sycamore Road, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 5DR
Telephone number	01753 891613 or 01753 893 321
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Registered person	Lyndsey Maclaren Nelson
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Beehive Montessori School was established in 1990. It operates from a large hall and two smaller rooms in St Michael's Church Hall, Amersham, Buckinghamshire. It is privately owned by Lyndsey Nelson. The school follows the principles of the Montessori teaching method.

A maximum of 32 children may attend the school at any one time. It is open each weekday during term time from 09:15 to 12:15, with extended sessions on Wednesday and Friday until 14:45. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 22 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The school supports children with learning difficulties.

The nursery employs six staff, of whom two, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted as the premises are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness. Children develop good self-care skills, as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times, and understand why this is important. The suitably equipped cloakrooms facilitate this. Effective policies and procedures are in place for administering medication and managing accidents, thereby helping to ensure children are well looked after.

Children have good opportunities for active, physical exercise. The outside play area allows them to run around within a secure environment. The regular walk to the local park affords the older and more able children greater opportunity to develop their physical skills on large apparatus. In addition, children thoroughly enjoy frequent musical movement sessions, which also promote general fitness.

Children benefit from the provision of a selection of fresh fruit at snack time, and often help to prepare it. For example, they slice banana and apple with a fruit knife, while being supported by staff. Fruit, juice and water are available throughout the session for children to help themselves. Having poured their drink, they sit contentedly on their own, or at the table in the company of others where a social time is created. Staff reinforce the message of the importance of healthy eating through discussion with the children and displaying posters. Children's individual dietary needs are known, and care is taken to ensure they are adhered to.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from premises that are maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and are light, bright and welcoming. Children's safety is important to staff. Risk assessments are conducted on equipment and activities to ensure children will not be harmed. Any potential hazards are reported and the risk reduced immediately. Children are familiar with the emergency escape plan, which is practised regularly. Security of the premises is good. Staff's vigilance ensures children cannot leave the hall unobserved. Children are learning to take personal responsibility for their own safety. For example, they are expected to mop-up any spillages they may make during play and tuck their chair under the table after use.

Children profit from the wealth of learning resources available for them. Montessori equipment is displayed on open fronted shelving to enable children to independently select what they wish to explore. All furniture and equipment is clean, safe and appealing for children to use.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the sound knowledge the manager has of child protection matters. However, staff are less clear about this issue, including the procedure for reporting concerns in the absence of the manager.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happy, and settle quickly into the well-structured routine of the day. They learn very quickly what is expected of them, which helps to develop a sense of security within the well-established boundaries. Children profit from the warmth and kindness of the staff and the praise and encouragement given. This also helps to create a feeling of belonging.

As well as the individual, structured learning that is integral to the Montessori teaching method, children enjoy plenty of opportunities to join in large group sessions, laugh and have fun with their peers and the staff. For example, they show obvious pleasure when anticipating what comes next when being read 'The Owl and the Pussycat', and enjoy imaginative play when rowing their boat up the stream.

Children's vocabulary is extended and developed as staff are skilled in asking open-ended questions to encourage children to think. For example, 'What would happen if we put this shell in the water?' Children's independence is well promoted as they select resources to explore by themselves and, having completed their task, tidy the item up and replace it on the shelf.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff observe the children and note their achievements. The information gathered is used to plan which Montessori activities would be appropriate to focus on to encourage each individual child's progress. Each Montessori activity is linked into the Foundation Stage to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn, and are highly skilled at assessing when a child needs help and guidance with an activity, and when they are benefiting from their own unaided exploration. Staff create an exciting and stimulating learning environment for children, as resources are deployed with skill and imagination. Themes are introduced, and activities planned around them to encompass all six areas of learning. For example, during the theme of 'water', children explored which objects float and which sink, observed ice melting and water boiling, and were shown how a rainbow is made using a prism.

Children enjoy good opportunities for physical exercise, either in the outside play area, or through regular walks to the local park. In addition, the musical movement sessions teach children how to control the movement of their bodies. A programme is being developed to allow children greater access to information technology equipment. Currently this is limited and does not afford children the opportunity to develop their skills on a daily basis.

Children concentrate well, showing good perseverance with activities. Pre-reading and writing skills are developed as they have plenty of opportunities to practise. For example, children select books for pleasure, and read to their friends as they run their finger over the print, thereby demonstrating that they understand that print carries meaning.

Children demonstrate curiosity and enthusiasm as they engage a vast array of exciting and fun activities. An atmosphere is created that is calm and peaceful, however, it is charged with positive energy as children are motivated and want to learn.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are respected and valued. They receive care and understanding from staff that treat them as individuals. For example, if a child does not wish to join in the musical movement session, but prefers to watch, they are permitted to do so. In addition, children are given time to complete a task, and not hurried, such as putting on their shoes. Having completed their task, they demonstrate a sense of achievement and pride.

Children have access to a good range of resources that enable them to develop a positive view of diversity within society and an understanding of others. For example, the display featuring India enables children to learn about its location in the world, and the customs and traditions of the people.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are welcome in the school. Staff have a positive attitude towards this area of childcare and a sound understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. They liaise with all agencies involved with an individual child to support them effectively.

Children's behaviour is very good as they engage fully in purposeful play. Age-appropriate and positive strategies are used to manage any difficulties that may arise. Consequently, the concept of right and wrong is reinforced in ways that the children understand. Appropriate praise and encouragement is given to enhance self-esteem and confidence. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. A wealth of information about the school is available for parents to consult to ensure they are aware of how their child is spending their time, this includes information about the Foundation Stage. In addition, parents are given information about the Montessori reading scheme, and how to support their child's progress at home.

All parents are greeted warmly by staff, and have the opportunity to share any relevant information with them to ensure the needs of their child are met. The complaints procedure is available for parents to follow, if necessary. However, the contact information for Ofsted requires updating.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a well-organised environment, which enables them to explore the play equipment in hygienic and safe conditions. Children's welfare is safeguarded because all required records and documentation are in place to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Children also benefit from the good working relationships staff enjoy with the parents. They share all relevant information with them, and involve them in the life of the school. This effective partnership contributes towards the children's sense of well-being and contentment. In addition, staff implement policies and procedures effectively.

The leadership and management of the setting are good. The manager is committed to the promotion of high quality childcare and education. She constantly develops and enhances the existing good practices to ensure positive outcomes for children are achieved and sustained.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as robust recruitment procedures are in place to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. Staff are well supported by the manager, and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility towards ensuring the quality of their teaching positively influences children's learning. Their deployment around the nursery is good and their attention focuses entirely upon the children's needs. Children profit from a staff team that works well together to deliver a challenging and enjoyable experience for them.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the school was required to put in place a procedure for the administration of emergency medication, such as an epi-pen. Staff have received training from a doctor and are now competent to administer the medication. Written parental permission is obtained from parents to administer it, if required.

At the last inspection, the school was also required to ensure written authorisation was obtained from parents to seek emergency medical advice of treatment. A form giving permission is now signed by parents.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all staff are aware of child protection issues and are able to implement the policies and procedures in the absence of the designated member of staff
- amend the complaints procedure to ensure parents have the correct contact details for Ofsted

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 implement the programme to increase children's opportunities to find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology and use information and communication technology and programmable toys

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