



The Chilterns Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY334508
Inspection date	29 November 2006
Inspector	Sonjia Nicholson
Setting Address	The Pavilion, Park Place, Seer Green, Beaconsfield, HP9 2FJ
Telephone number	01494 672209
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Registered person	Oakwood Nursery Schools Ltd
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 satisfactory. 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 Chilterns Montessori School is one of two nurseries owned by Oakwood Nursery Schools Ltd. It registered in 2006 and operates from the cricket pavilion in Seer Green, Buckinghamshire. A maximum of 30 children from two years to under eight years may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 37 children on roll. Twenty two children receive nursery education funding.

The nursery is open during school term times from 09.00 to 15.30 each weekday. During school holidays a fun club operates for children up to the age of eight years.

Five staff work with the children, all of whom hold relevant childcare qualifications. The setting is a member of Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from Buckinghamshire Early Years and Childcare Development Service.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have many opportunities for physical development. They eagerly participate in organised ring games in their Wellington boots outside in the fresh air, take walks within the local environment and use a variety of outdoor equipment where they climb, kick, jump and peddle. Children manipulate a range of tools, such as, scissors, paintbrushes and pencils during planned activities.

Children enjoy healthy food, such as, plums, breadsticks and raisins at snack times, however, they do not have their own plate and there are few opportunities for them to pour their own drinks and pass around the food independently. Throughout the session though, children have access to water in a lidded jug which they pour themselves, this means they are not thirsty. Children bring packed lunches from home which staff store appropriately in the fridge to prevent contamination, however staff do not rigorously implement the policy regarding nuts which could impact on children's health

Children learn good hygiene habits and routines throughout the day; they use tissues to wipe their noses and dispose of them in the bin, wash their hands after playing in the garden and before mealtimes and tidy away the toys at tidy up time to maintain a safe and clean environment. Minor accidents to children are dealt with by staff trained in first aid and details are recorded accurately, however on one occasion details of non-prescription medication administered were not recorded which is a breach of regulation and could have implications for children's good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a spacious, bright, well-maintained building. Children enjoy outdoor play in this unique rural setting; they have access to an enclosed garden and the large cricket pitch. There are a number of procedures in place to keep children safe, such as, checking the room temperature each day, but no overall written risk assessment is carried out to identify hazards. Staff supervise children well and help them to learn how to play safely, for example, a child carefully climbs onto a chair and balances to stand as a bright star when practising the Nativity play under the watchful eye of a member of staff and children line up to be counted before they go outside and when they return.

Children have access to a good selection of Montessori resources as well as traditional toys and equipment stored at their level to develop independence. Staff set out a variety of free play toys each day and encourage children to make choices about what they want to do. Resources are carefully selected by staff to link into themes, for example, there is a range of both fiction and non-fiction books relating to Christmas in the book corner.

Children have some protection from possible abuse and neglect as staff have a basic knowledge of child protection procedures; they know the signs of abuse and how to report their concerns.

Staff have a copy of the 'Local Safeguarding Children Board' document but do not share this with parents which means they are not fully informed about their role and responsibility. Staff have identified their training needs in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled; they confidently enter the group and part from their parents and carers. They are familiar with the structured daily routine which follows the principles of Montessori Education but within this they have opportunities to make choices about what they want to do. Children take part in free play activities, such as, the role play area set up as a restaurant, farm set and train track. Children are supported by enthusiastic staff who interact well in their play, for example, helping them to listen carefully to the shakers that make different levels of sound. Children take part in appropriate group activities planned using the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage.

Nursery Education

Children display high levels of independence; one hangs his paper chain on the drying rack using a peg and another gets a tissue to wipe her nose, then disposes of it in the bin in the toilet area. Most children can put their boots and coats on before going out to play. Children play co-operatively together in both large and small groups.

Children are making excellent progress in their mathematical development; they have a real grasp of numbers and some count securely to 20. They confidently name shapes and colours and order objects by size. Staff use mathematical language throughout the session, such as, 'under', 'biggest' and 'smallest'.

Children enjoy story time and listen intently as others speak. They engage in group discussions, sharing items from home and recalling past events, such as, their Halloween party. Children confidently say the initial sounds in words and during planned group activities, four year olds develop their handwriting skills and are beginning to form recognisable letters.

Children work competently on the computer; they use the mouse with ease, exit programs and select a new one. There are opportunities for children to construct models with a variety of equipment including junk materials. Children develop a sense of place and show an interest in the world they live in, as they describe the weather, sing songs about the seasons and go for a walk across the field and along the footpath to see the horses.

Children differentiate between colours and describe textures, for example, the sandpaper letters and playdough. They are beginning to build a wide repertoire of songs as they practice their Nativity play as well as singing favourite nursery rhymes during group times. Children keenly take part in creative activities, such as, making Christmas stockings and paper chains, but these are mostly adult planned and led; there are limited opportunities for children to freely explore and experience a range of tools and materials to express their imagination and creativity.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a sound understanding of the aims of their group activities and give children clear directions so they know what to do. Staff extend children's learning at every opportunity, for example, demonstrating how a piece of Montessori mathematical equipment works, then offering children the chance to explore it as they introduce new vocabulary. Staff make regular observations of children's progress and complete a record of achievement that is shared with parents. Staff manage children's behaviour well and create a calm, welcoming environment where children feel secure and able to learn.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about their local community as they go for walks in and around the setting; they invite visitors, such as, the local fire-fighters to the setting and discuss the roles of men and women and jobs they do to help children develop an awareness of equality. There is a good range of resources reflecting diversity including, Montessori cultural equipment, books, posters and dolls. Children learn about the wider world through themes and visitors, for example, American parents visit the group to discuss their customs and food. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator has a good understanding of how to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and liaises well with parents and outside agencies, such as a Speech Therapist.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They listen attentively, follow staff instructions and resolve minor incidents themselves. Staff provide good role models and a calming influence, speaking respectfully to the children at all times. Children respond well to the staff's constant praise and encouragement and collect stars as a reward for their behaviour and achievements.

Staff develop good relationships with parents and carers; they effectively share information with childminders and nannies to pass onto parents so they remain fully informed about the care received. There is good information for parents including a weekly letter with information about the themes and activities, a prospectus and displays of photographs linked to recent events, such as, the fire engine visit.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good information about the Foundation Stage and have daily access to their child's work book containing examples of literacy and number work. They can discuss their child's progress with staff at any time and receive a report at the end of the school year. Parents are encouraged to take part in their child's learning by sending items from home to share with the group and by sharing information via achievement slips, for example, a child's first visit to the dentist.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from well-qualified staff who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable; they extend their skills through attending relevant training courses. Staff work efficiently as a team; they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and support one another well throughout the

session. There are procedures in place to recruit and check the suitability of new staff but these are not fully robust. The day to day organisation of the provision is good but there are weaknesses in the written operational plan; some policies and procedures need updating to reflect changes to regulations and the recent change of ownership.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager has a good knowledge of planning and delivering the Foundation Stage curriculum; she shares this knowledge with the team and consequently they confidently contribute to and implement the planned activities well. The manager communicates effectively with the team and encourages them to evaluate planned activities. The Registered Person is aware of the group's strength's and weaknesses but has yet to evaluate the provision fully. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration that has 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 which parents can see on request. The 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 details of medication administered to children are recorded and parents sign to acknowledge this
- review and update all policies and procedures including the Complaints and Child Protection procedures

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):

- further develop opportunities for children to freely explore and experience a range of tools and materials to express their imagination and creativity

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