

The Rocking Horse Montessori Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127502
Inspection date	18 April 2007
Inspector	Fran Fielder
Setting Address	8 Lansdowne Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 2NJ
Telephone number	01892 532704
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Registered person	Linda O'Brien
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 outstanding. 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?

The Rocking Horse Montessori Kindergarten opened in 1990 and is privately owned and managed. It operates from the basement of the owner's home and a purpose built barn with wheelchair access. It is situated in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

A maximum of 34 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.30 to 16:00 during term time only. Children may attend on a sessional or a full time basis. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

Rocking Horse follows the Montessori philosophy and incorporates Montessori teaching with traditional methods.

There are currently 82 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 55 children receive early education funding. Children come from the local area. The nursery makes provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language.

There are six members of staff, including the owner, who work with the children. Four hold early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

The group receive support from the Local Authority

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in a beautifully clean environment where good personal hygiene is part of the daily routine. They know why they need to wash their hands after playing in the garden and before eating. Pictures in the toilets remind children to wash their hands. Throughout the day staff follow strict guidelines to ensure all areas are immaculate. This ensures children develop high standards of hygiene. All required documentation is in place and supports children's health and dietary requirements.

Children love to sit together for snack and lunch and look forward to the social aspect of mealtimes. They take turns to prepare nutritious snacks such as carrot and cucumber sticks and the use of tablecloths make mealtimes homely. Children pour their own milk and water at snack times which promotes independence. Stories such as 'Hungry Harry', 'Oliver's Vegetables' and 'Sweet as Strawberries' promote healthy eating. Parents also receive information about healthy diets including details of useful websites. Food hygiene training enables staff to teach children how to prevent the spread of infection when cooking. Children have their own place mats that include information about food allergies. This makes it easy for staff to identify dietary needs and ensures no child receives foods that could cause an allergic reaction.

Children have boundless energy and love to play in the garden. They busy themselves with a range of activities that develop strength and co-ordination and contribute to a healthy life style. They race through the snow on sledges, zoom along the water slide, splash in the paddling pool, dance round the May pole as well as playing games such as 'Twister', football and tennis. They show excellent manoeuvring skills as they push their 'babies' in buggies around the one way system or travel in convoy on bikes. Fine motor skills develop well as children have free access to range of tools.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in a safe and comfortable environment. The beautiful displays, posters and photographs that create the wonderfully stimulating environment enhance children's time at the nursery. The playrooms are beautifully laid out, allowing children very easy and safe access to a fabulous range of resources suitable for all ages. Soft furnishings allow children to sit and relax with friends in comfort. The resources are of high quality and in excellent condition.

A vast range of extremely effective safety procedures indoors and out ensure children are safe and well protected at all times. Procedures for collection of children are excellent and ensure only known and approved adults can take children from the nursery. The premises are secure and the high fence means children can play safely in the garden without being overlooked. The entry system and electronic gate means only known adults can enter the premises. Regular fire drills ensure staff and children can evacuate the building effectively in an emergency.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe when playing in the garden and always follow the one-way system to avoid bumping into each other. Staff are vigilant and supervise children at all times when playing on the climbing frame. Gentle reminders and good explanation mean children observe all safety rules. There are low hand rails for children to hold when descending the steps to the basement area. The steps are gritted in icy weather to prevent slipping. They learn about road safety and how to use crossings properly.

All staff have regular child protection training. This, together with detailed and easy to access information, means they are fully aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to proceed if they have concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in a very relaxed and homely environment. They play exceptionally well together and enjoy each other's company. A fabulous range of activities excite and stimulate young children. The many photographs show children smiling, laughing and concentrating. This truly reflects the fun, excitement and stimulation the children enjoy every day. They watch bubbles float away, give the 'babies' a bath and play 'Kerplunk'.

The nursery successfully combines the underlying philosophy of Montessori education with the Birth to three framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children's personal, social and emotional development takes priority. As a result, all children are exceptionally happy, secure, confident, independent and enthusiastic. The superbly delivered curriculum equips every child with the skills and knowledge they need to become high achievers.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn. Children enjoy a fabulous range of well-planned activities that help them make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Staff plan extremely well for all areas of learning and support individuals to achieve their full potential. They observe and assess children's progress and the effective evaluation of activities make it easy to identify children's next steps for learning.

Children listen extremely well to each other, are very polite and behave beautifully showing care and consideration for others. Stories about being kind, sharing and making friends help children learn the importance of co-operation. They learn good manners through positive interaction with staff and stories such as 'After you', 'Thank you', 'Hello' and 'I'm sorry'.

Children's communication skills are superb. Excellent interaction means children develop a wide vocabulary and learn to love language. Staff encourage conversation at every opportunity and recognise the importance of this aspect of a child's development. The print rich environment means children understand that print carries meaning. Staff introduce books well by giving the title and the name of the author. They read expressively which means children enjoy stories immensely. The use of 'Jolly Phonics' introduces children to the alphabet and helps them make links between sounds and letters.

Children develop a good understanding of early calculation as they compare the number of cups and children. Many children count confidently in French, as well as English, using one

number for each object. This shows a true understanding of number. Children recognise shapes when eating sandwiches they show staff the moon shape they have made.

Children make feeding balls out of fat and seeds for the birds and while in the garden children enjoy using binoculars to watch the wildlife. Growing seeds and flowers allows children to see changes in nature. Visitors to the nursery support many areas of children's learning. They learn about old toys brought in from the local museum, fire safety and health topics. Parents support topic work on people from different backgrounds by coming into the nursery to tell children about their festivals and culture.

Children's artwork is beautiful. Each week children study famous paintings by well-known artists. After looking at Van Gogh's painting of sunflowers, the children create their own paintings using a variety of techniques. Children negotiate well during role-play and take telephone messages for each other. Children love to dress up and make up their own stories.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff have a very calm and gentle manner and treat children with total respect. They know the children very well and understand how to get the best from each child. Children develop an awareness of their own and other cultures through an excellent range of resources, activities and celebrations such as May Day, Chinese New Year, Japanese Children's Day and Divali. Children have the opportunity to learn French from a specialist teacher who is enthusiastic and ensures every child achieves. Children also learn Makaton through stories such as 'We are sharing'.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff are consistent and use only positive strategies to help children learn right from wrong. Children are kind and caring and play exceptionally well together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Each term parents receive a bound booklet to keep so they can refer to it throughout the term. This gives information about the themes, activities and a list of book titles that are used in the nursery. This gives parents the opportunity to become fully involved in their children's learning. The booklet also includes information about events such as sports day, picnics and parents' evenings. There are reminders about sun safety and the children's key worker. Parents also have the opportunity to help in the nursery and are asked for feedback that staff can act upon to help improve the provision. Parents receive a written report on how well their children are settling into the nursery. There is also a notice board to share additional information throughout the term. Parents complete regular questionnaires and this information is used to adapt practice to best suit the children attending.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children play in an extremely well organised environment where excellent adult support makes children feel secure and confident. This allows children to learn and develop extremely well and easily meet their full potential. The excellent use of time means children are always involved in stimulating and worthwhile activities that support learning and social development.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Well thought out aims for the nursery reflect a total dedication and commitment to improving all outcomes for children. Management have a very clear vision of what they want to achieve and put together development plans to help them reach their goals. Constant communication means staff can devise individual aims for each child's development and learning. Continuous monitoring of the teaching and the careful evaluation of activities enables staff to enhance the learning experiences for children. Questionnaires for staff and children show how management value everybody's ideas and suggestions. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection, the kindergarten has introduced a wider range of nutritious snacks. This encourages children to develop healthy eating habits which contribute to their good health. The child protection policy has also been updated to include the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. This means all staff and parents are aware of the commitment to safeguarding children.

Since the last education inspection, staff have developed the role-play area by providing a very good range of dressing up clothes. The role-play area is also set up in different ways to reflect the topic. Children, for example, spend time buying and selling fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy eating project. This consolidates children's learning and makes it meaningful.

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.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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