

Lindfield Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113580
Inspection date	14 March 2007
Inspector	Felicity Gaff
Setting Address	The Cricket Pavilion, Lindfield Common, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 2EG
Telephone number	01444 484262
E-mail	
Registered person	Carole Benson
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?

Lindfield Montessori Nursery is one of a group of four privately owned nurseries. It opened in 1998 and operates from a cricket pavilion on Lindfield Common in Lindfield, West Sussex. Children have access to a small enclosed outdoor area in addition to the adjacent common. Children are drawn from the surrounding urban and rural areas. The nursery provides care for children aged from two to under five years between 08.00 and 15.00 on Mondays to Fridays during school terms. There are 57 children on roll and of these, 27 receive funding for nursery education. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as a number who speak English as an additional language. There are seven members of staff, six of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications, and the seventh is in training. The nursery follows the Montessori teaching method and three staff members hold Montessori qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn how to keep themselves healthy because staff teach good personal hygiene habits and explain the reasons for them. For example, they display clear pictures to remind children how to wash their hands. Children begin to learn to care for their own health; they understand the importance of wearing hats in summer and know not to look at the sun because 'if you look at it, it makes your eyes bad'. They have good opportunities to develop their physical skills through a range of opportunities for vigorous activity. Staff effectively promote children's welfare by following clear procedures for administering medication and managing minor accidents. Children receive nourishing snacks and meals in accordance with their parents' wishes. Parents provide packed lunches and staff offer suggestions of suitable lunch items to promote healthy eating. Children discuss the benefits of eating fruit and vegetables as they help to prepare snacks and pour drinks. Parents provide imaginative healthy treats, including melons and pineapple, which children share to celebrate their birthdays.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure environment and staff follow very good procedures to promote their safety. The premises are shared, so staff carry out daily checks to minimise risks to children from the actions of other users. There are clear procedures for promoting children's safety on outings and for supervising outdoor play, which staff follow rigorously. Children use good quality equipment, including Montessori apparatus, which is well maintained and stored in easily accessible units so that children can reach it safely. They learn to return play materials to their correct storage places after use, which contributes to an ordered environment and reduces the risk of tripping hazards. The written child protection statement is satisfactory although it has not been updated in line with the current procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The proprietor has a thorough knowledge of child protection issues. She and her staff understand how to protect children from harm or abuse by reporting concerns promptly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy an interesting variety of opportunities to play and learn in a warm and welcoming environment. Staff make excellent use of the Two to three matters framework to create a nurturing atmosphere where children feel confident to take part in the age-appropriate activities provided. Staff provide skilful support to help children feel at home, working closely with their parents to ensure individual needs are understood and respected. As a result, children develop their confidence and self-esteem. Children play harmoniously together, they demonstrate their social and linguistic skills as they cooperate at the water tray or work alongside each other with table-top toys. Children form close relationships with staff; they respond very well to the interested adults who work closely with them in their key-worker groups, providing consistent care. The organisation of play materials sometimes offers children insufficient opportunity to arrange and combine items such as trains and bricks to develop their imaginative play. Staff do not often plan how areas such as the home corner will be used to enhance children's learning. As a result, they give it little attention and children often only use it fleetingly.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a suitable range of first hand play experiences that support all areas of learning. Key workers know the children for whom they are responsible very well and keep detailed records of what they do. However, plans do not identify how activities will be adapted to meet the individual needs of all the children. Staff use the structured Montessori materials well to support children's fine motor skills and develop their mathematical understanding. Children frequently explore shape, mass and capacity and confidently count and compare numbers. They enjoy sharing books informally together, as well as listening to well-read stories. They make good progress in recognising the initial sounds in words, and begin to relate these to letters. They learn to look carefully at the world around them, using resources such as magnifying glasses and binoculars. They go on visits around their village and receive visitors to the setting. They explore technology by using the computer to create their own writing, and independently use it to scroll through photographs of their previous activities, some of which they have taken themselves. There are good arrangements for children's physical development and they enjoy active play outside throughout the year. Children experiment with a wide range of creative media; staff encourage them, for instance, to describe what they notice as they explore cornflour paste. However, many focused activities are adult directed. Staff provide very limited resources and clearly indicate what they expect children to do. They often use leading questions such as, 'Are you going to use this?' 'Would you like to put that here?' and 'Have you finished now?'. As a result children are rarely challenged to select their own resources and develop their own ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The nursery forges close links with parents, which allows them to work well together to meet children's individual needs. Partnership with parents of funded children is good. Parents receive suitable information about the setting and the education provided before their children attend, augmented by regular newsletters and written updates. Staff organise arrival and departure times well to exchange information with parents informally, and provide brief written summaries of what children have done each day. Parents have regular formal opportunities to meet with their child's key worker to discuss progress. Staff make sure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included. Parents are delighted with the quality of care and education their children receive. Children learn about the diversity of modern Britain as they celebrate festivals from a variety of different cultural traditions as well as their own birthdays. Staff help children understand why they need to be kind to each other and provide good examples themselves. Children behave very well at the nursery where the nurturing environment and consistent rhythms and routines help them feel secure. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provider has a clear understanding of her responsibilities and takes effective steps to ensure the nursery is well managed. There are good procedures for employing staff and appropriate checks are carried out to ensure they are suitable. All staff are qualified or in training and the provider encourages staff to attend additional short courses to enhance their skills. For example, she organises in-house training on Montessori principles and practice as well as encouraging staff to attend courses in London. Consequently, staff are familiar with the Montessori materials and have some understanding of how to use them to help children learn. The setting is generally well organised and any identified weaknesses are promptly addressed. Staff ratios are

consistently high. However, arrival and departure times are organised so that children are cared for in groups of more than 26, which means they receive insufficient individual attention. All the documentation required to support children's welfare is in place and is generally satisfactory. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The leadership and management of the funded nursery education are good. The effective organisation of key-worker groups means staff know their children well, and they keep their own records of children's achievements. However, there is no clear system to use these to plan for their future learning. Plans do not identify how activities may be adapted to challenge children of different ages or abilities. This hinders staff from focusing their teaching to ensure all children make good progress.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to improve the records of staff attendance. The records now clearly show which staff were caring for the children at any time. At the last inspection of nursery education the provider agreed to develop the use of the outdoor area and to improve children's independence in the creative room. Creative activities have been reorganised and children are now able to choose between different activities. Staff use the outdoor area imaginatively to provide suitable challenges for all the children. Although aprons are stored within their reach, children do not routinely learn to access them independently because staff are too quick to assist them. Many craft activities are adult directed. Staff regularly provide examples of what they intend children to do, offer a limited range of resources and guide children's choices through leading questions. As a result, children have too few opportunities to explore their own ideas, set their own challenges, take risks and learn from their mistakes.

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 provider has recorded all complaints made to Ofsted by parents.

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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):

- update the child protection statement to reflect the current procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

- ensure that children are cared for in groups of no more than 26 children

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):

- improve opportunities for children to develop their creativity by setting their own challenges, exploring their own ideas, taking risks and learning from their mistakes
- improve the use of assessments to identify what individual children can do and understand in order to plan for their future learning in all areas of the curriculum

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