



Epping Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127806
Inspection date	10 January 2007
Inspector	Cheryl Langley
Setting Address	Catholic Church Hall, Church Hill, Epping, CM16 4RA
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Registered person	Jennifer Timms
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Epping Montessori Nursery is one of two privately owned nurseries. It opened in 1992 and operates from a large hall within a Catholic Church in the town of Epping in Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:30 to 12:30 during school term-times.

There are currently 33 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider catchment areas. The nursery welcomes children with learning and/or physical disabilities and supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the Manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the Local Authority. The nursery uses Montessori teaching methods.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

All of the required procedures and documents are in place to help staff act in the children's best interests should they require medical attention. For example, parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment and advice is sought at the time of placement. This is to enable staff to take the necessary steps to care for a child if there is a medical emergency. Records of accidents and any medication administered are shared with parents. This is to keep them informed and ensure children receive continuity in their healthcare.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and clean environment. They are aware of the importance of good personal hygiene through organised routines and interesting activities. Children know why they need to wash their hands before eating snacks, after messy play and using the toilet. They take part in routines to help tidy up and wash their own glasses after snack. Staff follow suitable hygiene routines to prevent the spread of infection and keep all of the toys and equipment clean for the children's use.

Children develop and enhance their physical skills as they take part in a variety of activities. They become adept at using utensils and tools. For example, they manipulate play dough into different shapes, transfer water with a pipette and put rice into small vessels using their finger and thumb or spoons. Children cut pictures from magazines with scissors and manipulate the computer mouse to move images on the screen. They balance and co-ordinate their bodies to climb up, over, through and down the large climbing frame or to move the see-saw up and down. Children enjoy following the actions to simple songs, such as, 'Hands, shoulders, knees and toes' and enjoy playing musical instruments. The routine for each session and organisation of the room allows sufficient time and appropriate areas for quiet activities and rest.

Children are beginning to learn about the benefits of healthy food and a balanced diet. They enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks and help themselves to water at any time. Discussions at snack time and exciting activities reinforce their knowledge and understanding of what is meant by a healthy lifestyle. They know that it is important to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day and to have regular exercise. Children have fun making vegetable soup and trying different foods from other cultures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children's welfare is safeguarded. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection who has attended training in this area. All staff are aware of the nursery's child protection procedure which incorporates the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the National Standards.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure children are kept safe at the nursery. For example, risk assessments are carried out regularly to check the hall and equipment for any potential hazards and staff are deployed to supervise the children in all areas. Children move around safely and freely to play and access resources independently. They use a varied range of good quality developmentally appropriate toys and have sufficient room to take part in different types of activities without coming to harm.

Through regular discussions, planned activities and interesting books to reinforce safety messages children learn to protect themselves. They become aware of the dangers of fireworks and the importance of keeping a safe distance from bonfires to stay free from harm. Children practise the fire drill regularly and know why they must leave the building quickly in the event of a fire. They follow codes to cross the road safely and know how to use a zebra crossing. Staff use sensitive reminders to explain safe practices, such as why children should not run so they do not fall and how to hold the broom appropriately to avoid hurting the other children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff provide a supportive and caring environment which helps the children settle and feel secure. Children learn social skills and make positive relationships with the other children and staff. They take part in a good range of interesting and stimulating activities which provide appropriate challenges. This helps them to develop and make progress. There is a good balance of adult guidance which enables them to explore and try new experiences independently, but also provides support when it is needed. Children respond positively to challenges. For example, they concentrate for long periods to cut pictures out of a magazine or to use trial and error to complete puzzles.

Children benefit from the range of activities on offer which develop their abilities and skills. For example, they learn to recognise different colours when they choose and compare coloured shells. They count the number of items in pictures or as they sing songs. Children use mathematical language correctly to describe the 'middle' or to pick out which animal has the 'biggest' ears. They learn matching and sequencing with card games and jigsaw puzzles. Children learn about the natural environment. They describe the weather and complete the chart each day. Children represent their ideas through creative play. They enjoy gluing coloured paper and material to make a collage or painting freely with a brush or their hands. Children use their imaginations during role play to express their feelings and experiences. They have fun becoming princesses and fire officers or playing in the home corner and preparing meals for their friends. Children recite nursery rhymes or talk about their news in front of their peers with confidence.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well, supported by staff that have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage. Plans cover all six areas of learning. There is a good observation and assessment system in place which informs the next step required for each individual child to make progress. Both the plans and children's assessments link closely to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest all of the children and more able children's learning is extended. Staff are attentive and ask children questions to reinforce their skills in maths and literacy and encourage them to use their initiative.

Children are able to move all parts of their bodies with confidence. More able children climb up, over and through the climbing frame without assistance. They co-ordinate their arms and legs to join in with action songs and become adept at throwing and catching bean bags. Children enjoy music and movement sessions and soon learn a number of simple songs. There are extensive opportunities for children to develop their hand-eye co-ordination using a range of craft materials, mark making and other equipment, toys and puzzles. For example, they transfer liquid or small pieces to vessels using pipettes, spoons or their finger and thumb. Children become aware that exercise is good for you. They know that it creates changes to your body, such as making you feel hot and thirsty. Children write lists, copy simple sentences, write in anniversary cards to create letters which they post to their home. More able children write recognisable letters to form their name and label their own art-work independently. They draw pictures and copy sentences to describe their experiences in their news books. Through planned activities and free choice children make progress in their creative development. Children manipulate play dough and pastry into different shapes using their hands and various tools. They stack boxes and tubes to make different models. Children join connecting bricks to make aeroplanes to hold in the air to fly around the room or build towers of differing heights. However, there are no opportunities for children to explore different media and materials on a large scale.

Children listen attentively at story time or enjoy looking at books on their own. They know that pages turn from left to right and offer suggestions of what might happen next. Children speak confidently in small or large groups. They develop new vocabulary to describe what happened in the past or to talk about objects, pictures or their feelings. Children learn to link sounds to letters by rhyming words and sounding out initial letters. For example, they join in with the narration to "Goose on the loose" and call out rhyming words, such as "toad" and "road" or "ted" and "bed". They learn to recognise letters and numbers by writing them in sand or joining dots to form them correctly on paper. Children develop simple counting and calculation skills. They participate during songs, nursery rhymes and daily routines, counting in sequence or taking one away. Children count their peers during registration to ten and beyond. They link pictures to the correct amount in their workbooks or to match clothing to the correct basket on the computer. They recognise patterns to match pairs of mittens or shapes to fit into the correct space of the inset puzzles. Children learn simple addition, subtraction and sharing. They know how to count on to add one more or to take one away and take part in preparing snacks to share pieces of fruit out with their peers.

Children explore changes as they observe the seasons and growing plants. They observe and talk about the growing daffodil bulbs and make pictures of bare winter trees to decorate the hall. Children are aware of the different sounds animals make and that some come out at night and sleep during the day. They make models of snowmen with play dough. Children have a lot of fun using their senses to explore flour, they make pictures with it and watch it falling onto the table or covering their hands.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the strong partnership with parents which supports their care. Parents receive information about the setting and the activities available to their children. They are

made aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework which is used to plan activities for children upto three years of age. Parents are encouraged to work closely with the nursery and provide details which will enable staff to care for their children appropriately. All of the provisions policies and procedures are shared with parents at the outset and a termly newsletter and the children's day books keep them up-to-date. However, the complaints procedures lacks some detail to ensure parents are aware of the steps taken should they have any concerns about the care their children receive.

All children receive a warm welcome and soon become settled enough to take part in the full range of activities. They develop a sense of belonging through the positive relationships fostered between themselves and the staff. The flexible settling-in procedures and observations made makes sure staff have the opportunity to get to know the children and their parents well. This enables them to meet the children's individual needs and provide suitable activities for their abilities. Staff encourage the children to talk about their feelings and experiences. Children become confident and independent. They respond positively to responsibilities, such as tidying up, washing their glass or helping at registration time.

Children are learning to behave well. The staff are positive role models and they manage behaviour effectively, using appropriate strategies. For example, they offer lots of praise and encouragement and show that they value children's achievements. They explain that behaviour has an impact on others and acknowledge kindness and consideration. Children work harmoniously together and show respect and regard for the needs of others. They are polite, remembering to say please and thank you and help their peers to carry toys or encourage new children to make choices from the equipment on offer. A meaningful range of activities and resources promote a positive view of the wider world and increase children's awareness of diversity. They enjoy tasting food from India to celebrate Diwali. They play with dolls and figures representing people with differing abilities and from various ethnic backgrounds.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good quality information about the Nursery Education provided. They are informed of the current topics being covered through the regular newsletter and notice board. Parents are invited to attend consultations with their key worker, make comments in the day book and attend social gatherings to share their children's progress and achievements. They are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by sharing topic related items and books and continuing with some of the activities at home. Parents exchange information about the children at the end or beginning of each session with the experienced and friendly staff. Parents receive a full report regarding their children's achievements with samples of their work at the end of their placement. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children enjoy a balance of large and small group times, as well as one-to-one support during the sessions. They gain from the range of planned activities and free choice of the resources available which keep them interested and engaged. Staff are committed to improving their practice to ensure the children are stimulated and sufficiently challenged. They evaluate their planning, procedures and activities regularly, making changes if necessary. The 'Birth to three

matters' framework is used to plan appropriate activities for children up to the age of three years.

Children benefit from the staff who are suitable to work with children. They have knowledge and understanding of child development and appropriate checks. For example, all of the staff have early years qualifications and three have current first aid certificates. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures are followed to ensure the children are safe in their care. Policies and procedures are followed by staff to allow the effective running of the nursery and to keep children healthy and safe. Overall, the range of the children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The professional development of the staff is encouraged by the manager who carries out regular appraisals to identify strengths and training needs. Staff are enthusiastic about updating their knowledge and understanding of child care and education and attend various courses to meet the individual needs of the children. They have weekly and termly meetings to share information about the provision. Plans are monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure there is a good balance of activities to cover all six areas of learning. They work together as a team to plan activities and play for children to learn and make progress through the Foundation Stage.

Children are well prepared for entry into school or nursery after their attendance at Epping Montessori Nursery because the manager and her dedicated staff team work well together. They have developed positive working relationships and are committed to promoting an inclusive environment for all of the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection Epping Montessori Nursery agreed to two actions to put procedures in place to safeguard the welfare of the children. Confirmation was received from the provider in writing on 24 July 2006 to state that the actions raised had been met. At this inspection evidence was gathered to show policy documents have been updated and staff are made aware that in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer with regard to child protection, the regulating authority and Local Safeguarding Children Board are notified. Parents are also made aware of these procedures before children start to attend nursery.

To develop the design and making skills for the nursery education of the children, staff agreed to provide more opportunities for children to build and construct independently using a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources and adapting their work where necessary. Different size cardboard boxes and tubes are available for modelling with freely, and children explore and manipulate play dough and pastry during child-led activities.

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 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 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):

- make sure parents are aware that they should receive a response to any complaints received from them within 28 days.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to explore media and materials on a large scale.

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