



Holly Corner Montessori Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402169
Inspection date	25 January 2007
Inspector	Lynn Amelia Hartigan
Setting Address	104 Shrub End Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 4RX
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Registered person	Holly Corner Kindergarten 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 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?

Holly Corner Montessori Kindergarten opened in 1998. It operates from a converted house in Colchester. The Kindergarten serves the local community and surrounding areas.

There are currently 90 children from two to under five on roll. This includes 52 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language.

The kindergarten opens for five days a week. Sessions are from 08.45 until 15.15. Some children attend morning sessions and leave at 12.30. The Kindergarten is closed during August, Christmas and Easter.

There are 16 staff who work with the children of which 13 staff have recognised early years qualifications at NVQ level 2 and 3 and above. The setting receives support from the local authority. The Kindergarten have been awarded the NHS Snack Attack award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have very good opportunities to stay healthy whilst attending the Kindergarten as the staff consistently pay attention to all health related issues. Staff are motivated in providing a clean and safe environment in which children can play as they follow a daily risk assessment and policies on cleaning.

Children's daily routines include hand washing before snack, lunch and when they have been to the toilet and after messy play. The staff effectively explain why they need to wash their hands and what effects germs have on their bodies. Tissues are offered for runny noses, and children are reminded that it is sensible to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze. Children have a good understanding of the importance of keeping themselves healthy as staff discuss these issues in small groups. Clear policies and procedures that are clearly followed with regard to health and safety, ensure children are protected well.

Written accounts of accidents and medication administered ensures that parents are fully informed about their children's medical needs. This also includes a separate informative report with regard to a child who has bumped their head. Children's needs are managed well if they have an accident, as most staff are trained in first aid.

Children are taught about healthy foods and how to keep themselves healthy through themed projects such as 'our bodies'. The staff encourage healthy eating and nutritious snacks are offered such as; fresh or dried fruit cereals and bread sticks. Milk or water is readily available and children are self sufficient and confidently pour themselves drinks from small jugs. Children bring their own packed lunches, these are plated and chilled. Meal times are relaxed and children are able to complete their lunch at their own pace.

Children have many opportunities to experience fresh air on a daily basis, as they play in the well equipped and fully enclosed garden. The staff are committed to ensure children are offered a variety of physical play opportunities outdoors, they are able to run around in the garden, ride bikes, throw and kick balls with some accuracy, having fun rolling balls down a drain pipe.

Opportunities are also provided indoors to ensure the children develop their physical skills. Children balance and have good posture and spatial awareness, for example, they walk along a chalked line on the carpet, some balancing glasses of water with skill, as they go.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in an exceptionally well organised, bright, attractive and welcoming environment. Thorough monitoring of the entrance door by staff and the use of an intercom system ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unseen. Visitors are monitored and asked to sign the visitors book. Children and their parents are made welcome at the setting as they are greeted at the main door by a member of staff who is genuinely pleased to see them. The walls of the nursery are brightly decorated with the children's work, photographs and posters, plus information for parents.

Children can independently access an extensive selection of play and educational equipment, as this is set out for them or stored in a low level shelving units within the rooms. Children safely help themselves to items of equipment which are regularly checked and monitored by vigilant staff who ensure they are complete, safe and clean. Children successfully learn about keeping safe as they follow the staff's clear directions and advice. Posters displayed prompt conversation about personal safety and what to do in certain situations.

Children are expertly protected from potential harm as staff demonstrate an extensive knowledge base about child protection issues and how to deal effectively with any concerns. They work closely with other agencies to ensure that families are well supported and that children's continued safety is paramount. All staff have a clear understanding of their individual responsibility to ensure the well-being of all the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have many good opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A broad selection of quality toys and resources are available to them within the playrooms and garden, this enables them to have fun and learn. Even very young children are able to independently select toys with ease and confidence as they are organised and easily accessible. The staff have made good use of the space available and the kindergarten is welcoming and child friendly. Children feel very comfortable, secure and settled, they happily leave their parents. Child sized furniture and cosy areas for the younger child to play, create a very welcoming environment.

Young children receive good support as the staff have a sound knowledge and have completed training with regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are implementing it successfully within their planning. Some activities are theme based and take into account the children's individual stage of development and understanding. For example, the Kindergarten are learning about the 'environment and re-cycling' young children talk about the compost bin within the garden and tell you how to put your peelings in, whilst older children are able to explain the function of re-recycling.

The children's play is positively led by their own interests and most of the activities are initiated by them, However, focused, adult led activities are planned within the days routine. Spontaneous activities such as outdoor play because it is snowing is greeted with enthusiasm. The children excitedly dress ready to play outside and have great fun making footprints in the snow and

making snowballs. Snow is bought indoors and the children are able to explain why it has melted. Children have great fun digging in mud outdoors, shovels and pots are available to assist their play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and understand how young children learn and develop. Activities are planned to support the individual children's stages of development and therefore provide good opportunities for them to be challenged and to problem solve. Assessments, some written observations and evaluation ensures the children's needs are met in all areas of learning. Staff are very knowledgeable of the children's stage of learning but this is not always detailed sufficiently within the observations and therefore written observations do not always inform the next stage of planning.

Children are extremely well behaved; they are able to concentrate for prolonged periods of time as staff create a calm and relaxed environment. Children initiate their own games and are self sufficient, for example, they are able to select from the low shelf units, mostly these are 'practical life' activities such as using a dropper with water, pouring lentils from one jug to another. Children are amused for a considerable amount of time smelling the contents of many jars, pulling faces with disgust or pleasure because of the smells inside.

A play area that is the 'recycling centre', inline with the rooms theme, quickly becomes a building site as the children decide to build a new house. Adult support is at hand and the children are able to ask questions and for props to assist them. They draw plans of the house they want to build and busily pretend to cut out windows. Suggestions are made regarding escape in the event of a fire and extra doors and windows are put in.

A book area is well resourced and popular. Children enjoy reading the books and clearly understand that the text has meaning. They read together sitting on a child sized sofa or in small groups with a member of staff who is happily to read on request. Children are able to learn about their environment and the world around them as the staff ensure they have opportunities, such as watching birds in the garden, the life cycle of a butterfly, and grow plants. Binoculars and magnifying glasses are easily accessible within the garden.

Staff encourage the use of mathematical language when playing at the dough table for example, when using the knives to cut the dough they talk about the size of their dough, large, huge and small. Children learn about weight and measure when cooking.

Bright posters at children's level offer them opportunities to see number lines and grouping. They are able to count the numbers on the clock and have some concept of time and what will happen next and what was past. Children have some opportunities to add on and subtract through their every day routines, such as counting chairs in preparation for lunch. Children are competent when using the computer, they enjoy math programs where they match shapes and sequencing.

Children are beginning to understand that text has a meaning as the staff ensure there are many opportunities for children to use their writing skills. Some children can write their name well and many make good attempts. An office area that includes stickers, pens and paper is available daily and is well used. Children self register and sign their names on a daily sheet.

Children are very proficient speakers, they confidently approach you and are able to articulate well what they want. They equally converse well with each other. Their language is being developed by staff who ask open ended questions and use simple explanation to stretch the children's thinking.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are very well known to staff who actively seek information from the parents about their children's home backgrounds and beliefs before they start at Kindergarten. The information provided by parents is used to ensure that staff are able to effectively meet all children's individual needs. Children are very settled, valued and respected at this setting, they are confident and clearly feel like an important member of the group.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their understanding about other people and their way of life as they learn about the various cultures. Regular visitors to the group such as a French teacher provides the children with a range of experiences.

Children needing additional help are expertly supported by staff who demonstrate a clear understanding of child development and monitoring children's progress. All children are included within the setting and the room layout and activities ensure inclusion. Children requiring additional help receive support and guidance from outside agencies and staff work closely with parents to ensure that they are fully included in all discussions and plans for future action. Through the skilful support from the staff all children are able to communicate and make their own choices as to what they want to do. Staff are subtle and discreet allowing children who require support have their own space and be independent but clearly are at hand to fully support them.

Children are very well settled and content and comfortable with each other. Children are aware of what is right and wrong and are able to apologise for their actions without prompting from staff. Children happily help each other out, for example, when tidying away and using a computer program. They have formed excellent relationships both with their friends and the staff.

Children's well-being is exceedingly well promoted as staff and parents work effectively together to ensure a smooth transition between home and kindergarten. Many opportunities are available to ensure parents and staff communicate on a daily basis and staff are always accessible to discuss a child's needs with the parents. A strong emphasis is put in welcoming the parents into the kindergarten and a good working relationship and exchange of information assists the staff in supporting the children's needs. This is achieved successfully as the kindergarten have created a robust information file that supports their expert practice. This is offered to parents, along with a welcome pack and a prospectus.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Children's care and education is superbly enhanced by the staff who have positive and open relationship with the parents. Involving the parents with the initial assessment of their child and gathering of all relevant information, when starting kindergarten enables parents to be fully informed regarding their child's starting point for learning.

Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home as 'to and fro' books are in place. An abundance of information is available to the parents with regard to their children's learning. Parents are fully informed about the topics and themes being covered as they receive regular, well presented newsletters and information is also displayed within the individual play rooms. A suggestion box is widely used and the staff value the parents contributions as they strive for excellence. Parents comment on the dedication and commitment of the staff and are extremely pleased that their children attend this setting.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The kindergarten is very welcoming and effectively organised to support children's play and learning. The play space indoors and outdoors enables children to explore, play safely and have fun. The children benefit from being cared for by motivated, qualified and experienced practitioners. The staff are committed to training, are reflective and strive for excellence. Ensuring the staff team are up to date with current childcare practice means children receive high quality care.

Children's care is enhanced as the manager and staff ensure the children's day is varied and well organised. The staff are able to support and meet the needs of all the children in their care as a result. Most documents are well maintained, with the exception of the attendance records as these do not detail the time of arrival and departure of the children.

The leadership and management are good.

The manager is enthusiastic, motivated and strives for excellence. The staff team work effectively at all times and are fully informed regarding their roles and the expectations of them. All staff are motivated and committed to providing a high standard of care and education. They are encouraged and supported with regard to training and are well supported in their own development by the manager.

Regular meetings that include the whole staff team are arranged to discuss planning and general kindergarten issues and provide opportunities for staff to have their say. This gives an opportunity to review their practices, so that the best care can be offered to the children. The staff's professional developmental needs are addressed and met through a formal appraisal systems and through ongoing day to day discussions. Staff are fully consulted in all aspects of the kindergarten and are actively encouraged to make suggestions for improvement.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure all children were included within the key worker system. Every child attending the Kindergarten now have a key worker and as a result children settle well and form good relationships with a familiar member of staff. Parents are able to discuss their children's individual needs and ongoing development with their child's key worker.

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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted

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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):

- ensure attendance records detail the times of arrival and departure of children and staff

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 develop the system with regard to observation and assessment, to ensure plans sufficiently link with the children's development records.

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