

St Gregory's Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109315
Inspection date	24 April 2007
Inspector	Stacey Sangster
Setting Address	Victoria Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 8QY
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Registered person	Chairman of the Trustees
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?

St Gregory's Montessori Nursery School is owned by the catholic church Diocese of Arundel and Brighton; three local trustee directors provide management support. It is non denominational. It operates from a church hall adjacent to St Gregory's main church building in Eastbourne. The setting has a small kitchen, toilets, and an outdoor area available for use. There are several schools, shops and a library nearby. The setting serves the local area and is open to all children.

There are currently 67 children from 2 to 4 years on roll. This includes 33 funded 3 year olds and 20 funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.00 until 16.00, with children able to attend for a full or half day.

Six staff work with the children. All of the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). The group uses the Montessori method of teaching.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are supported well in relation to their personal hygiene. They are monitored effectively to ensure that they wash their hands after using the toilets and before snack time and understand that the reasons for doing this relate to being healthy. Toys and equipment are clean and the children are involved in washing tables before food is consumed and after messy play.

Children bring in packed lunches from home. Good diet is promoted by the setting, who send home leaflets and guidance to parents about healthy ideas for packed lunches. Children are growing their own vegetables in the garden and talking about the benefits of eating fresh fruit and vegetables. They enjoy healthy snacks at the setting and are offered rice cakes and a choice of fruit or raw vegetables. Drinking water is available at snack time and on request. Children learn the importance of keeping fluid levels higher during hot weather. Most are beginning to understand that they need to drink after going outside or energetic play and this helps to prevent them from becoming dehydrated.

There are procedures in place to protect the children from the risk of infection. Children who are infectious are not permitted to attend and notices forewarn parents if bouts of sickness or illnesses are reported to them. A written policy informs parents of illnesses and infections that children may not attend with; although this is limited in relation to the information it provides. Additional information in the form of posters detail exclusion periods.

High numbers of staff with first aid qualifications are present at all times as all but one member of staff holds a current first aid certificate. This ensures that children are appropriately cared for in case of a minor accident. Similarly, procedures relating to the care of sick children and the administration of more common medicines are appropriate. The setting was unaware that they are required to request written parental permission, at the time of the placement, to the seeking of any future emergency medical advice or treatment that might be necessary in the future, and were not aware that if training is required to administer medication of a technical nature, that it should be specific to each child. These omissions impact on the effectiveness of the settings ability to meet the health needs of all children, although to date this has not been an issue.

Children enjoy very regular opportunities for physical play. They make good use of the enclosed out door play area and take part in energetic games supported well by staff. When weather permits, they enjoy daily opportunities to climb, use ride on toys and to exercise in a variety of ways with their friends. Staff recognise the importance of regular physical exercise and ensure it forms part of every session.

The emotional well-being of all children is very well fostered through the praise, supportive contact and cuddles they receive from staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play with a wide range of toys and resources based on traditional Montessori philosophy. These are very good quality are well-maintained and appropriate for their ages and stages of

development. Equipment is attractively displayed and stored at all low levels so that children can access them safely and easily.

Children are encouraged to be very independent. A good range of safety precautions and staff who are vigilant in their supervision, enable children to confidently move around the setting and explore their environment. Door security is very effective and the outside is securely fenced and gated. Unauthorised adults cannot gain access to the premises and grounds and children are unable to leave unsupervised.

Written risk assessments and safety checklists are regularly completed by staff. In addition, fire safety precautions are appropriate. Fire exits are free from obstruction. Fire fighting equipment is in place and checked regularly. Evacuation drills are practised regularly and are monitored to ensure that all children have taken part each term and are familiar with how to respond in an emergency.

The staff team have a good understanding of child protection issues. They are fully aware of their responsibility to report concerns and have the relevant contact details. As a result, children are effectively safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in this setting. They are well occupied and engaged in purposeful play throughout the session. Children demonstrate good relationships with staff, approaching them without hesitation for assistance and chatting happily about their discoveries, ideas and thoughts. They settle quickly on arrival and know the routines well. They show enthusiasm and interest for the activities provided and the orderly and well organised resources enable children to quickly locate materials which they want to use.

Children's independence is very well supported in this setting. Children are able to self select activities and are aware that they need to be returned to the same place when completed. All children take responsibility for keeping resources tidy. Children's confidence is promoted well by the arrangements in place. They show pride in completing activities and delight in showing their finished 'work' to their teachers.

Nursery Education:

In line with Montessori teaching, children are encouraged to progress through a series of tasks which increase in complexity as they go on. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the foundation stage and six areas of learning and how to promote these. As a result children are making good progress, equally in all areas of their development.

Children have good opportunities to count and recognise numbers. They use these developing skills spontaneously in their play as well as in adult lead activities. This helps to consolidate their learning and demonstrates children have an understanding of how to use their emerging mathematical knowledge for a purpose. They enjoy books and most know that print carries meaning. Creative pursuits are very popular and children show increasing skill as they use art materials, sing songs and recite rhymes. The children are exposed to a wide range of resources which increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. They enjoy using small tools which supports their fine motor skills and make good use of the outdoor area to promote and extend their physical development in relation to their gross motor skills. The children's personal,

emotional and social skills are promoted by the staff who value kindness and thoughtful behaviour, support the children well and enhance their self esteem through regular praise and encouragement.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. A well balanced routine ensures that the pace and content of the day meets the needs of all of the children. Plans and records show that all areas of learning receive equal attention and focus. This is supported by the consistency in the children's achievements and progress recorded in their assessment files and is reflected across all six areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are able to celebrate festivals and significant days which are important to them and their families as well as learn about other customs and cultures from around the world. The detail that the setting records about each child, enables staff to offer care which meets the individual needs of each child. Children feel valued, develop a positive self image and play in an environment which promotes freedom from discrimination. Children are treated with equal concern and encouraged to develop their own potential and to grow as individuals with differing needs. Children with special needs are supported effectively by the routines and practices of the group.

Children benefit from praise and encouragement. Staff use positive methods when managing children's behaviour for example gently reminding children to think about how it feels to be treated unkindly. Children are treated with patience and a very clear and consistent responses from staff. Children are given choices and if behaviour becomes challenging are very well supported by staff to help them find a more constructive outlet for their feelings. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents have open and friendly relationships with staff and there is always opportunities for parents to talk to staff on a daily basis. Parents are kept up to date with information about topics and forthcoming events. Notice boards and newsletters are both used effectively. There are some missed opportunities in relation to Nursery Education. Currently the assessment of children's progress does not contain parent observations in relation to what their children can do and the information shared about what children need to do next to make progress is limited. Parents have opportunities to share what they know about their child's care needs before the child starts and are encouraged to keep staff up to date with any issues that may affect their child's individual care needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and progress is promoted by the careful organisation to meet their care, learning and play needs. The environment is thoughtfully laid out to provide pockets of activities and give children opportunities to develop their skills in relation to the five specific Montessori areas of learning. These are practical life experiences, sensorial exercises, language development, mathematics and reading records.

A high ratio of adults to children is offered and support staff are in place to allow childcare staff to concentrate fully on interacting with the children. Staff are well deployed and organise the activities and the children very well, the day flows seamlessly and children remain well

occupied and engaged in purposeful play. Staff are skilled at ensuring that children are never left waiting for an activity to start. For example, staff and children engage in enthusiastic singing with actions, while small groups go to the toilet before snack.

There is a basic range of written policies and procedures in place and these are fully understood by all staff, who countersign them to confirm that they agree to promote them. All documentation is present at every session, allowing staff to revisit as necessary. There are arrangements in place to continually update and improve the documentation and all staff are involved in this process; this contributes to the effective management of the setting.

The leadership and management of the setting are good. A positive relationship exists between the whole staff team and this creates a harmonious environment for the children. In addition, the management team are proactive in identifying any possible areas for improvement in the service they provide and are in the process of completing the 'Eye for Excellence' self evaluation system devised by East Sussex County Council Early Years Development and Childcare department. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The setting have made positive progress in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection. The information forms completed by parents before a child starts at the setting now records clearly information from parents which enables appropriate care to be given, with particular regard to language, culture, religion, and race. In addition the grouping of children has been improved and written plans now indicate how group activities can be adapted to take into account children working at different levels and rates.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that parents are aware of the procedure that would be followed in the event that they make a complaint about the setting

- amend the system for recording accidents and medication records to ensure records remain whole
- ensure permission is requested, at the time of the placement, to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future and confirm the parents agreement [or not] in writing, of this for children currently attending.

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 parents with specific information about where their children are in their learning and the next steps identified to help them make progress
- include parent observations of what their children can do as part of the formal assessment of their progress

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